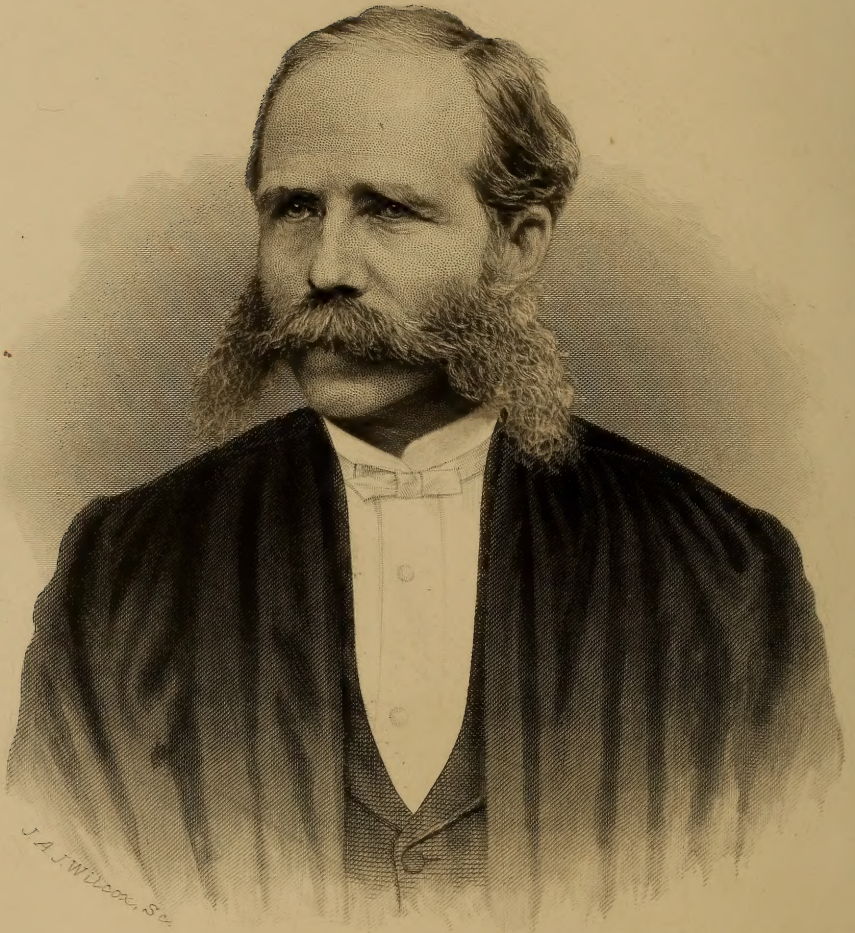


LIBRARY OF CONGRESS.

~~BX 7233~~
Chap. _____ Copyright No. _____

Shelf M265 S4

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.



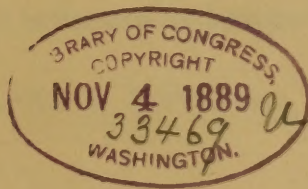
J. M. Manning

SERMONS AND ADDRESSES

BY

REV. JACOB MERRILL MANNING, D. D.

PASTOR OF THE OLD SOUTH CHURCH, BOSTON, MASS.



BOSTON AND NEW YORK
HOUGHTON, MIFFLIN AND COMPANY
The Riverside Press, Cambridge
1889

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE.

JACOB MERRILL MANNING was born on the 31st of December, 1824, in Greenwood, Steuben County, New York. To a pious ancestry, a Christian home, and communion with nature, he was largely indebted for what he was and what he did in his life-work. He fitted for college at Franklin Academy, Prattsburg, New York. There he made a public profession of religion, uniting with the Presbyterian Church and consecrating himself to the work of the gospel ministry. He entered Amherst College in 1846, and was graduated in 1850, receiving as his appointment the Philosophical Oration. The subject of his oration at Commencement was "Knowledge in its Relation to Mental Development."

One of his professors,¹ who still lives, says of him at that time: "He was manly, thoughtful, earnest, and sincere, — a hard student, a thorough scholar, an elegant writer, a good speaker, and an exemplary Christian. Made originally of precious metal, cast in a fine mould, he took on a finer polish at each successive stage of his education."

He studied theology at Andover, and was ordained

¹ Professor William S. Tyler, D.D.

SICKNESS AND ITS LESSONS	395
THE ABUNDANT ENTRANCE	412
THE VICTORY OVER DEATH	425
THE GOSPEL OF THE WINDOWS	438
THE NATURAL AND THE SPIRITUAL BODY	450
CHRISTIAN MISSIONS AND THE SOCIAL IDEAL	463

ADDRESSES.

SAMUEL ADAMS	483
JOHN BROWN	508
EULOGY UPON HENRY WILSON, DELIVERED IN THE STATE HOUSE, BOSTON	532

SERMONS.

THE IMMORTALITY OF THE CROSS.

And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing. — REVELATION v. 11, 12.

ONE of the symbols of Christianity is a globe surmounted by a cross. That symbol does not exaggerate the truth it seeks to honor. The cross is the great fact in human history. It will yet be seen to overshadow all other facts, will survive them all, will be an object of ever-growing wonder when they all are forgotten. Human history will run its course, will be finished up, will be laid aside to decay and disappear. The very traces of events shall be worn away from the world's surface. There shall be no vestiges of kingdoms, of states, of hierarchies, left on the face of the earth. Only the cross shall remain. That shall be monumental over the grave of all else. That shall forever be growing more conspicuous on into the ages of ages. It shall keep the memory of our planet fresh and dear through eternity. The redeemed souls dwelling in immortality and the angels out of the seventh heaven will ask after that cross, will speak of its wondrous virtues, will watch with tender interest

the motions and phases of the far-off ball on which it was lifted up that all men might be drawn unto it. That ball will be to them the place of the cross, and nothing more. It will be nothing to the holy immortals that great empires were founded on the earth; that it was the theatre of civil convulsions and bloodshed; that upon it were builded mighty churches for the glory of men; that it witnessed gorgeous ceremonials, from which the cross was left out, or under which it was concealed from view; that systems of doctrine, constructed in the pride of human intellect, have fought for the mastery on its surface: all these things, filling so large a space in our sphere of vision now, will be nothing then. For aught they could do to prevent, this earth might sail on everlastingly, unnoticed by the bright inhabitants of heaven. The cross — the cross alone — saves the little planet from oblivion, causes every saint and angel to ask after it, to gaze wonderingly upon it, to regard with peculiar interest those of their number who came from it. It is the altar-world, to which the Son of God went to lay down His life and take it again. They look upon it, and their hearts are melted. They take their crowns from their heads, and turn toward Him who sitteth on the throne, — Him who was then the victim, but who is now the King. And they cast those crowns at His feet, saying, “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing.”

In saying that the cross is that alone which will perpetuate the memory of our world, I do not speak simply of the wood on which our Saviour was crucified, but of the whole redemptive work of which that cruel wood is suggestive. Christ's whole work, from the

time of leaving His throne until He returned to it, is that which calls forth the adoring song of the host in heaven: His putting off the forms of divinity, and entering into the form of humanity; His corporate union with our race, so as to be a partaker of our infirmities and temptations and sorrows and struggles; His beautiful life of meekness and charity; His pure teachings, and His holy submission culminating in Gethsemane and Calvary; His triumph over death; His fulfilling of justice; His power, purchased by His sufferings, to give the quickening and sanctifying Spirit unto His people. When we speak of the cross, we mean Him who bore the cross — who took away the sin of the world; who prevailed to open the seven-times sealed book of redemption; who here, on this earth of ours, solved the mystery of forgiveness; who explained that dark problem at which the universe stood aghast, and showed, to principalities and powers in heavenly places, how sinful man might be just with God. It was on our globe that Christ took up the awful enigma of sin, made atonement for it, wrought deliverance from it, and taught the wondering host of heaven how it could be an occasion for exalting the divine glory. This redeeming and law-honoring work, all associated with the cross, is that which shall perpetuate the memory of our world, and make it forever dear to the assembled worshipers in heaven.

Do I seem to over-estimate the history of redemption, and to disparage all other history? Let us see, then, how inevitable it is that the result should be as I have indicated. The memorableness of an event does not depend on its greatness as seen when it occurs, but on its relation to the future. Some of the

most splendid scenes in history are forgotten almost as soon as witnessed, all their meaning being limited to the passing hour ; and other scenes, too obscure to be noticed while passing, have so taken hold of coming ages as to wax great and overshadowing in the retrospect. There was a time when the boy Shakespeare excited but little interest in his native town ; but he so wrote as to make the ages his debtors. And now his name saves that town from oblivion. Who would visit Stratford-upon-Avon, or regard it with any romantic interest, but for the poet who there wrought in obscurity for the delight of mankind ? In like manner, what is this globe but for the great Name associated with it ? A time is coming when it will be lost in the wilderness of worlds. Who in heaven will value or remember it on its own account ? But Christ was born there. There He did a work which took hold upon all the future, — whose meaning stands out more and more as eternity wears on. That is the poor earth's monument ; that saves it from being forgotten, and makes it evermore an object of tender regard. Other names besides that of Shakespeare have made other places dear or memorable by the same law. How many of us would know, or care to know, that there is such a place as Ayrshire, but for the poetry of Robert Burns ? Florence, the native city of Dante, though she banished him while he lived, begged his ashes of Ravenna, that she might encircle herself with the halo of his immortal fame. What should we of to-day care for the English hamlet of Bedford if John Bunyan had not lived there ? How many proud noblemen of that time, who knew not his name, are now forgotten ! They were like mighty ships left to rot by the shore ; he launched his boat on the bound-

less sea of the future. They built great houses on the sand; his foundation was upon a rock. What is left of Genoa, that we care for, save the memory of Columbus? What of Mt. Vernon, except the tomb of Washington? There are many rocks along the coast of New England, but only one on which the Pilgrims landed. There have been, and still are, whole forests of oaks in Connecticut; but only one saved the royal charter from violence. Many eminences higher than Bunker Hill are not known ten miles away; yet that eminence is known wherever liberty is loved. Many battles, greater than the battle there fought, have been fought and forgotten; but that will ever be remembered. It took hold upon the future. It was not of transient but of permanent interest, — all struggles of freedom do but repeat and prolong its voice. How many places in our country, that we had not heard of twenty years ago, are now named as familiar household words! And those obscure spots will be remembered, and eagerly inquired after, when many a proud city of to-day has perished and been forgotten. The deeds done in those once unknown localities will make them dearer and dearer to successive generations.

But even the most memorable places now named, once so little regarded, will in time lose their significance. There is a future into which even their meaning does not reach. They reveal to us a law that is full of instruction; yet, by the operation of that very law, the dead past will one day bury them with its other dead. They will cease to have any living interest, any vital relation to present and future things, and hence the great storehouse of oblivion will claim them. They have a mystic hold upon us now; but

their spell will be broken, their charm will be gone, when we step out of time into eternity. If there be any immortal substance in any of them, that essence will be only a part of the work which Christ did, and hence His cross will absorb or overshadow all. That peculiar charm which Plymouth has for us now, — that mystic cord which draws us toward ancient battlefields, and to the quiet spots where sages and poets have dwelt, — though lasting as time, is, after all, but temporal. There is only one spot on all the earth that can never lose its interest. It is Calvary. That hallows, not only Palestine, but the world, — embalms it forevermore. There comes a day when the spot where Warren fell will have no more interest than ten thousand other forgotten places ; a time when those sympathies and tastes which now give the birthplace of Shakespeare its charm will be no more ; when a thousand spots of earth, now the Meccas of our hearts, will have been disenchanting ; when all the earth, save as hallowed by the one fact of redemption, will be commonplace and stale. It is a grand consummation into which the people of this country have come up out of a baptism of blood, so changing their supreme and organic law as to be indeed and forever free. Yet this event, consecrating the century in which we live, endearing to us every name recorded in its favor, though so august now, is circumscribed in its power. There is a life into which its peculiar charm cannot reach ; there are worlds on whose regard it lays no special claim. Christ alone did the work which concerns every being in the universe ; the work which never decays, which never becomes a thing of the past ; which excites new wonder, and calls forth loftier notes of praise, as the ages of ages

circle on. That wondrous humiliation and death stand related to all worlds, and to all the cycles of an eternal future. The mightiest personage on earth, comparing himself with Christ, is still forced to say, "He must increase, but I must decrease." When temporal kings have vanished into the past, and are no more remembered, the song shall go up in a sweeter and grander strain, "Worthy the Lamb." Other empires will cease to be of any account; but "His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and of His government there shall be no end." "Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the work of thy hands. They shall perish, but thou shalt endure; yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end." Only one interest in the universe can be eternal. It is the great work of love, whose symbol is a cross, and which is forever associated with Calvary. Love in the form of self-sacrifice, going after the lost, working out redemption from guilt, triumphing over the dark fact of sin, — this is the everlasting kingdom, beginning in Christ, compassing all the worlds, and upon which He is evermore enthroned.

Such is the destiny of Christ's work. Only so much of it as is part and parcel of Christ's work, and over which the cross might be fitly lifted, as it is over His, can thus endure. Whatever is not identified with His great salvation must perish when the fashion of the world passeth away.

We read of the works of some men, that the fire shall try them, and that their works shall be burned up. Not so of Christ. He builded with silver, and

gold, and precious stones ; and his work, when the fire trieth it, shall be found unto praise, and glory, and eternal life. Are we building with the same imperishable materials? All is hay, wood, and stubble which is not a continuation of the Redeemer's work. We must have the mind that was in Christ, and live as He lived, or all our living will be transitory, — chaff which the wind driveth away. We must follow in His footsteps, and associate all the experiences of our lives with the cross. Then the cross will preserve our works, — will make them as enduring and glorious as itself.

We shall not do this imperishable work by cultivating simply a sentimental respect for the form of the cross. Nothing can be more refined or beautiful than a sincere Christian life ; yet Christianity should not be confounded with fine art. Christ showed but small regard for the ancient temple adorned with goodly stones. His manner of speaking of it greatly shocked the feelings of the devout Jews. The immortal soul was that for which He cared. We shall lose His spirit, and become Jews while bearing the Christian name, if the æsthetic element in our faith is allowed to sway us. Taking up the cross, and bearing it daily after Christ, is not wearing it as an ornament to our persons ; is not lifting its carved or gilded image over our houses of worship ; is not rearing vast cathedrals on cruciform foundations ; is not covering the walls and windows of the sanctuary with blazing pictures of our Lord's passion. We cease working the works of God, and do the work of our own vain hearts, when we thus turn from spirit to matter, from substance to form, from sense to sound, from downright obedience to daintily cultivating the

fine arts. Christianity is not fancy and taste. Honoring the cross is not pleasing ourselves. You may bring to your aid the genius of a Canova, a Raphael, a Mendelssohn, a Garrick ; may bestow never so much wealth and pains to meet the wants of mere taste ; may make your whole religious life one beautiful and costly pageant : but all this work will vanish away, like some gorgeous cloud-palace, the moment a beam out of eternity touches it. It is worshiping the achievements of human art, not worshiping the Father in spirit and in truth. It is a kind of sacrilege. It is turning the forms of Christianity into an amusement, putting them on a level with the concert-hall and the playhouse. It may be all very fascinating ; it may be a charming substitute for hard thinking in the pulpit, and hard listening in the pews ; it may have on the guise of devotion, and call itself after many sacred names. But it is of the earth, earthy. It is all seen and temporal. The element of eternity does not come into it. It is no part of the cross of Christ. It will perish amid the elements that melt with fervent heat, in the day when the fire shall try every man's work. Not one echo of all the earth-born strain will live in that song which goeth up before the Lamb.

But while guarding against one extreme, I would not forget its opposite. If those who make religion a fine art forsake the Cross of Christ, those who are forever battling against tasteful forms of worship commit the same sin, and render themselves very unamiable besides. Union and communion in good works is the normal condition of the various bodies of Christians. Not devotion to their common Lord, but their own lusts, beget wars and fightings among

them. The surest way of honoring a truth is to hold it up and exemplify it, not to fight the opposite errors. When Moses would save his people from the flying fiery serpents, he did not turn serpent-killer, but lifted up the brazen serpent. Thus is Christ lifted up; and if we keep Him in full view of men, not embroiling the Lord's house with religious controversy, He will draw all men unto Him. The champions of truth, and defenders of the faith, are not necessarily fighting-men, — men of war from their youth, of so militant a zeal as to blow defiance through all their tones, the lines on their faces constantly drawn into one concentrated belligerent scowl. The most effective way of pleading for Christ against His enemies is to let Him plead His own cause before them. Lay aside the club of controversy and introduce Him, and all His adversaries will speedily be ashamed. If a sensuous, materialistic worship has no part in Him, the same is true of all else that does not give to His cross the chief and foremost place. The way to scatter darkness is not to be forever beating it, but to bring in light. Christ is the light of the world. There is in Him a surpassing beauty, which all men can be made to feel. Forms and creeds must change, as our social and intellectual culture changes; and they, at the best, supply only superficial and brief-lived wants. But the want in us which Christ meets is central and everlasting. No education can change it, save to make it intenser and more vast. That is the susceptibility in us that needs to be awakened. Here are the measures of meal in which to hide the good leaven; there the soil which, receiving the grain of mustard-seed, shall nourish it up into a mighty tree. Let love to Christ become the master passion, and we need not

trouble ourselves about other passions ; it will swallow them up. The healing and saving power of the gospel does not dwell beneath our crossed swords. Are you a polemic ? The day is coming when no one will care whether you conquered or were defeated, for the warfare itself will be forgotten. Are you a zealot for some human theory of the church ? Your work will perish with the world of which it was born. Are you a propagandist, teaching for doctrine the commandments of men ? One generation of them goeth, and another cometh ; only the word of the Lord abideth. Do you chase after every new religious dream that seizes on your fancy ? What can that dream do for you when your soul awaketh ? Are you a proselytizer in the interest of some religious party ? Your converts will curse you, for turning them from the substance to the shadow of truth, in the day when Christ shall be all in all.

Do not misunderstand me. There is here no controversy with any man's taste, or peculiar culture, or natural proclivities toward this or that form and method of expressing his new life in Christ Jesus. Let the river make its own channel in which to flow : all our anxiety should be for the fountain. What quarrel need we have with Methodism, with Episcopacy, with Presbyterianism, except to protest against allowing either of them, or any form or theory of church order, our own not excepted, to usurp the place of the Cross of Christ ? There are conventions, and courses of sermons, and newspapers, and endowed faculties, and voluntary societies, in the interest and for the furtherance of human views of doctrine and polity. Each one of these views has some special adaptation ; but no one nor all of them can ever be

the main concern. If we allow them to absorb our interest, the main concern will very likely be forgotten. If Christians press the claims of these, and bring them into conflict, and make it a chief business to build up one and tear down the others, who is to look after a world that lieth in wickedness? Who is to hold up the blood-stained symbol of redemption? These human contrivances will have vanished out of sight one day; and what if it should then be found that there are no saved souls inside of them, — no everlasting temple built within these showy scaffoldings? “Give me the new converts,” is the voice of a true Christian discipleship, “and you may have all the ecclesiastical powers. Let me see pure religion planted in the hearts of men, and you may have that earthly grandeur which perishes with the using.” Whoever is an earnest co-worker with Christ will be tenacious of no forms, no theories of the church; he will only be afraid of that which crowds the regenerating spirit of God into a secondary place. Let that spirit come. Let it be what we pray for, what we labor for, — our joy when it is present, and our desire when it is absent. That spirit does the deep, the everlasting work. It creates the fountain. It opens the well of living water. Its triumphs are not superficial, but central; not transitory, but enduring as God. Be afraid of any schemes, though called religious, which keep this divine inspiration at a distance, or make it secondary, or cause it to be forgotten. The new birth of souls, and growth in all true holiness, is the cross — the work of Christ, — that which shall swell the chorus in heaven. Oh that Christ might see of the travail of His soul; that He might be satisfied; that there might be joy in heaven over returning prodigals; that we

who call Christ "Lord" might enter into His labors for the rescue of poor immortals! Then the cross would be honored. Then church order, and doctrine, and forms of worship would grow up as this spirit of redemption had need of them. Then it would soon be decided which of them all is truest and best; for the inner life would choose that one which made it most effectual in reaching and saving the lost, and all the others would wax old, and wither up, and vanish away. Then we should build up temples, each church and each believer, such as the fire cannot destroy. We should provide polished stones for that temple whose builder and maker is God. Instead of the sad moan, "Nothing but leaves, nothing but leaves," as we approach our Lord's footstool, we should be able, in that dread harvest-hour, to say, "Master, behold the shocks of corn, full and ripe, which these hands have reaped for thee." "Souls are our hire," was the thought which gladdened the apostle in his penury. Oh that we all might learn to regard them as our wages! Then we should have the treasure that waxeth not old. Then our work, like Christ's, would be imperishable; for it would be the same work, and over it all the same cross would be lifted up, — that cross which is to remain the sole memorial of our world, and for bearing which both Master and disciples shall be crowned in the same kingdom.

It was in this spirit that the first preachers of Christianity labored. You can find no forms of worship, no theory of church government prescribed for all ages and nations, laid down in the gospels and epistles. Paul would let the Jews enjoy their ancient customs, so long as those customs did not obscure the cross, and so long as they were not imposed on

the Gentile converts. Where the spirit of the Lord was, there was liberty for each disciple to act out his faith naturally, — through such machinery as was congenial to him, or without machinery. “Unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; to them that are without law, as without law (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ), that I might gain them that are without the law. . . . I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air.” It is the permanent in Christianity, not the transient, the essential, not what is merely incidental, that engages the apostle’s heart, and all his powers. Why is it, my brethren, that we do not learn to follow this inspired example? We vex ourselves over that which is outward and formal; and most fitly may this worry of ours be called “a beating of the air.” We can do but little, however much pains we take, toward shaping church polity and forms of worship. Such incidental matters are determined by influences we cannot control, — by the spirit of the age, great social forces, and ideas of government prevailing in the state. They may have Dissenting churches in England, but the really prevailing theory of church government there is predetermined by the nature of the civil government. That is the type, the model, the surrounding and silently moulding power. So in this country. We sometimes say that Congregationalism gave birth to our civil institutions. But I think it would be nearer the truth to say that the spirit of liberty, evoked by what is called the Protestant Reformation, gave birth to our civil institutions and also to

Congregationalism. Now that spirit is around us all. It is the informing and controlling spirit, not only of our nation, but of modern times. We are swept onward unconsciously by its currents. Arctic adventurers have sometimes traveled northward for days at a rapid pace, and then found themselves farther southward than when they set out. The motion of the vast ice-pack on which they were, was against them. So, in this country, men may travel toward despotism in their ideas of church order; but, after all their pains, they will one day find themselves nearer simple Independency than when they started. The people of our country will never consent as a mass, and for any long period, to submit to a religious régime which puts them into a state of tutelage under human governors. They will carry that spirit of independence, which the state has nourished in them, into their ecclesiastical connections; and there it will work, like new wine in old bottles, unless perchance, fortunately for both, they be new bottles. No matter what name the ecclesiastical body is called by, freemen in it will make it free. Those of us, then, who feel that our view of church order and forms of worship is in sympathy with the free spirit of the nation, need not be anxious, nor at all nervous. We can well afford to devote ourselves with all our might to the more central and spiritual purpose of the gospel. These subordinate matters need not tempt us away from the cross. We can safely trust them to the great currents of influence, which will bear them on to all the success they deserve, and which will undermine opposing theories. We need not assail, and attempt to demolish with angry strokes, the icebergs of ecclesiasticism. There is a force in the ages which will sooner

or later float them out of the polar darkness in which they were gendered. And in warmer and sunnier latitudes, meeting the gulf stream of free ideas and institutions, their cold grandeur will lose its sparkle; and they will crumble, and melt, and blend with the surrounding waters. The cross is our standard, — that let us follow. In that we conquer, — conquer, not for time, but for eternity; conquer, not hierarchies, but the Prince of the powers of the air, — the first and the last enemy of the Lamb that was slain.

I have alluded to doctrine. What is the relation of that to the cross of Christ? As the doctrines are often preached, presented to the speculative understanding regardless of the heart, they may divert our minds from that which is of central and permanent concern in the Christian calling. The profoundest Christian doctrines have a vital connection with the cross. But their vitality depends on that connection. When severed from the cross, they lose their life and their power to save. It is by offering a personal Saviour to men that we shall most effectually teach and enforce the substance of them all. The Scriptures compare those doctrines to water, — the water of life proceeding forth from the throne of God and the Lamb. But they are not this life to the soul when set forth in scholastic and labored phrase. Only as lifted up on Calvary, in the form of a crucified Redeemer, do they draw all men unto them. They are the living water. But when that water takes the form of philosophy, it does not bless our thirsty souls, — we look off, as it were, on a dreadful ocean of waters, and stand yearning and shivering on the awful shore. It is in Christ, coming to each one of us as a personal Saviour, that we see the blessing lifted out of the

“vasty deep,” and transformed into streams gushing by the wayside of the poor pilgrim, of which he drinks and is refreshed.

What every soul of us needs is not so much to know what we believe as whom we believe. That was the knowledge of which Paul dared to boast; and without which, he confessed, though he understood all mystery and all knowledge, he would be as sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal. He knew in part, and he prophesied in part; and not until the perfect should come, would the imperfect be done away. But he thanked God that he was permitted to know one thing even in this life,—he knew whom he believed, and that knowing of Christ, as his Saviour and Lord, was a treasure which nothing else could give or take away.

Brother-man, with a soul full of trouble over these great questions of sin, redemption, immortality, hear what Christ saith to the heavy-laden. Are the champions of warring creeds calling to you, and saying, “Lo here! Lo there!” “Go not out after them.” Do sticklers for theories of the church and forms of worship take up the cry from all quarters, until you are bewildered by their noise and shoutings? “Go not out after them.” “Come,” says Christ,—come unto what? Unto that which flatters your pride, which pleases your taste, which falls in with your earthly ambitions, which humors your fleshly desires? No, poor laboring soul; not unto these, unto nothing able only to meet some brief-lived and superficial want, but “Come”—oh, listen! listen as though there were no other voice in all the world!—“Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.”

Where is this Christ, this meek and lowly-hearted Friend, who thus tenderly pleads with you to take His yoke upon you and learn of Him? Is He far off, or near at hand? He is close by your side. He lays His hand upon you. He whispers, in the silence, "Follow me." Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven to bring Christ down from above, or, Who shall descend into the deep to bring Christ up? "The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth and in thy heart; that is, the word of faith which we preach, that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." We miss the living water by going out after it. It gushes at the feet of every man; and if any man thirst, let him drink.

"Came North, came South, came East, came West,
 Four sages to a mountain crest,
 Each pledged to search the wide world round
 Until the wondrous well be found.
 Before a crag they take their seat,
 Pure bubbling waters at their feet.
 Says one, 'This water seems not rare,
 Not even bright, but pale as air.'
 The second says, 'So small and dumb,
 From earth's deep centre can it come?'
 The third, 'This well is small and mean,
 Too petty for a village green;'
 The fourth, 'Thick crowds I looked to see :
 Where the true well is, these must be.'
 They rose and left the mountain crest,
 One north, one east, one south, one west ;
 O'er many seas and deserts wide
 They wandered, thirsting, till they died.
 The simple shepherds by the mountain dwell,
 And dip their pitchers in the wondrous well."

SONS OF GOD THROUGH CHRIST.

He came unto His own, and His own received Him not. But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name : which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

JOHN i. 11-13.

THE salvation of the human soul is dependent on just one thing, receiving Christ: "As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God." So important a statement ought to be looked at closely, and carefully weighed. We are saved when we stand in the relation of sonship to God; responding, that is, with filial piety, to that fatherliness which He feels toward us. We have been thrown out of that relation into a condition of spiritual orphanage. By nature we do not see God as a Father, but as "an hard Master." We are still His children, for He is "the Father of the spirits of all flesh," but the child-feeling within us is dead in the midst of our "trespasses and sins." He would see His orphaned child restored, — longs to be able to say, "My son was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found." And this longing of the Father's heart is met by our receiving Him who was both the Son of God and the Son of man, — the Son of man and our brother, in the sense that He shares with us, in some wonderful manner, all the pains of our orphanage; the Son of God, in the sense that He enjoys, perfectly and in an infinite degree, that sonship into

which we have power to enter through believing on His name.

The force of these words, "Son of man," lies in the opening announcement of the text: "He came unto His own." There may be here a primary reference to the Jews, of whose stock He came in the line of David; but the broader meaning, which makes all mankind "His own," is just as true. The whole human family became "His own" by His taking humanity upon Him. That taking of humanity was what made Him the "Son of Man," — the Brother, as God is the Father, of the spirits of all flesh. And He is no unsympathizing brother. By virtue of His humanity we are made "His own" to Him; and in this relation it is that He takes all our human infirmities upon Him, and comes to us, — revealed as a bearer of our temptations and sins, though Himself without sin. And He is not ashamed to call us His brethren, to be numbered with the transgressors, and to stand forth and make confession of our sins for us in the presence of His Father.

But many who are His own — His by virtue of His being in humanity — do not receive Him. This was especially true in the beginning of the gospel; most true of the stock of Abraham. It is more or less true in all ages of the world. And still, as at first, His rejecters are sometimes those whom we should expect to see receiving Him most eagerly. We, dear friends, may deceive and mislead ourselves, just as multitudes of Christ's "own" have done in former ages. Like them, we may picture to our minds what Christ will be when He comes; and then reject Him, at His coming, because so different from what we had pictured. Undoubtedly there are many false Christs, whom men

believe in while rejecting the true Christ. The Scripture says, "Judge not, that ye be not judged;" and I do not propose at this time to judge any man; but may I not turn inward, upon each one of our spirits, that light which there is in the text, thus making it, to us all, a revealer of our condition before God?

Of how many of us can it be truly said that Christ "has given us power to become the sons of God"? This question may be answered by determining how many of us have received Christ. What is He? and what is it to receive Him? These are the decisive inquiries.

Some of us, who hope that we have received Christ, may have mistaken something else for Him. Our Christ may be more or less a fiction of our own minds, into agreement with which we wrest the Scriptures, rather than the real Christ which the Scriptures offer us. In one respect we are worse off than those who lived in the time of Christ. Their false views of Him, which they had cherished in advance of His coming, were disproved by His actual appearance. But we may live on, holding fast to a wrong opinion of Him, nor have our error corrected till we meet Him in judgment. Our first great need, then, in making up our minds what Christ is, is an unprejudiced and docile spirit. We must not come to Him with some preconceived theory, or system of doctrine, and look at Him through that distorting medium; but we must let Him come to us, and must see Him as He is. He is a Saviour. "Thou shalt call His name Jesus," said the angel; "for He shall save His people from their sins." He is the Atoner, the Reconciler of the world to God. An instructor into all morality, yet not a moralist. A teacher of profound doctrine, yet

no framer of doctrinal systems. He came to do a work rather than deliver a message. That He spoke the truth, is not His grand peculiarity, but that He was the truth. "In Him was life, and the life was the light of men." He was the "first-born of every creature"; that is, the first instance of a perfect divine sonship in humanity. This preëminence among His brethren was witnessed to when the Spirit descended like a dove upon Him, and the voice out of heaven said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased." What the Father desires in men is, that they should feel as He feels respecting their sinfulness. It is their sin which awakens the wrath of a holy God; and the moment they abhor their sin, precisely as He abhors it, that moment He lays by His anger. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." But no man is equal to this confession in his own strength. He must have One to intercede, and to confess for him. Now here it is that we find that by which Christ is made a Saviour to us. He is that, in sinful humanity, which the holy Father must find in order to forgive sin. By His infinite sympathy He enters into all our sad state, and bears upon His heart the burden of our sins, though Himself without sin. He is the perfect and holy Son of God in humanity; and He responds for us, as we cannot for ourselves, to that condemnation which has gone forth against us. He feels as our Brother what God feels as our Father, in view of our sinfulness. And that feeling, on the ground of His brotherhood with us, is accepted as our feeling; accepted, that is, so far as we, by choosing to partake in it, become the sons of God. This Son, obedient unto death, His

sonship proved by His sufferings, is the Christ of the Scriptures. "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God!" "No man cometh to the Father but by me." "No man knoweth the Father but the Son, and he to whom the Son shall reveal Him." The Christ, therefore, whom we are to receive, is this perfect Son of God and human brother; this filial Spirit in humanity, in perfect agreement with God's Fatherliness, — His confession as our Brother a perfect Amen to God's condemnation as our Father. Can you conceive Christ in this relation to you? Perhaps not clearly. No doubt I fail to present Him adequately. But the intellectual apprehension is not necessary. It comes after, rather than before, the time at which we are made sons of God. But there is one light in which you can understand Christ; that is, as the procurer of salvation for you. It is as doing this for you that you must apprehend Him, or you cannot receive Him. To accomplish this work, it is, that He becomes the sinless Son in sinful humanity; the bearer and confessor of all our sin, who did no sin; pouring out His soul unto death, that He might be to us the resurrection and the life.

And what is it to receive this holy, suffering Saviour? — this Son of man, our perfect Brother; this Son of God, our reconciler to a justly offended Father? To receive Him is more than to admire Him. Many shall say unto Him, "We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets." But He shall say, "I tell you, I know you not whence ye are." All must be filled with wonder and subdued to tears at the sight of the pure Son of God veiling Himself in corruptible flesh; owning as His brethren, before the Father, those with whom

the Father is so deeply and justly offended; and making confession of their sin, that He may be to them a way of reunion with the Father. It is not in our power to be unmoved by such love, — a love in which the hearts of the Father and Son are revealed in perfect accord, — a love which shows that the Father is ready to forgive the moment we make confession, and in which the Son makes confession for us because of our infirmity.

To receive this Christ is to let Him do for us that which He came to do. And this “letting,” on our part, involves a free and earnest choice. We must choose to take that which He waits to give. We are not dealing with fate, but with love. You do not let Christ do for you what He came to do, while you are indifferent, — while you say, “I will take no further concern for myself, but leave all to Him.” He does not come in through the bolted door; only those who hear His voice and open the door sup with Him, and He with them. There must be the perceiving eye, the hearing ear, the understanding heart, the consenting will. You have heard men object to prayer, on the ground that God will bestow all He intends to without our asking: “to ask Him,” it is said, “is to doubt His love.” Not so. For that asking is the response of a child’s love to a father’s love. It brings the minds of the receiver and giver into sympathy, and this sympathy is the channel through which the blessing flows. The rain of divine grace descends on the just and the unjust, but only the just have power to receive it. The sun of God’s love shines on the evil and the good; but to the evil, whose souls are closed up, that light of love is only darkness. Thus it is that there must be on our part a choosing of Christ,

—a choosing Him to be our Confessor into the Father, to be our perfect sonship in humanity until we are introduced into the liberty of the sons of God. You do not “receive” a physician until you yield yourself to him as a physician. And so you do not receive Christ until you choose Him as your peace with God, as fulfilling for you that perfect duty of a son toward God, of which you are yourself effectually incapable. It was this inward, spiritual reception of Christ, not the outward hospitality, which made Zaccheus “a son of Abraham.” In this inward sense Christ was rejected by great multitudes, who followed Him, and entertained Him in their houses. We are to observe that He made only two classes of all men. Such distinctions as Jew and gentile, learned and unlearned, rich and poor, Pharisee and publican, were nothing to Him. None who rejected Him as a perfect Son and Brother to deal with the Father on their behalf, but only those who received Him, and believed on His name as that whereby they might be saved, had power given them to become the sons of God. All professions, and pretensions, and preconceived theories, and intellectual systems went for nothing. On one side is put every rejecter and on the other side every receiver of this Procurer of salvation for us; and unto these latter alone it is that Christ is made a reconciling Brother, to bring us nigh unto the Father, whom we have forsaken.

Yes, He gives to all such “power to become the sons of God.” In one sense, as I have said, no man has ever ceased to be a son of God; for God is called “the Father of the spirits of all flesh.” Saint Paul, reasoning with the unbelieving Athenians, taught them that they were “God’s offspring.” It is probable

that the Lord's Prayer was given to the disciples before they had entered into any new experience of sonship. Yet in that prayer they are taught to say, "Our Father." And it seems to me that we must recognize this child's capacity in all men, or we can cherish no hope of the recovery of men to God. There must be a susceptibility which can receive the life which there is in Christ; something which was dead, but which can be made alive again; a capacity of which we are unconscious, but which it is one office of Christ to quicken within us, until we shall sigh for a reunion with the Father. No new thing is created in the prodigal; but when he comes to himself — awakens up thoroughly to what he already is — he arises, and seeks the Father's arms. There is something in every individual of humanity, which, in reference to the life in Christ, is akin to the capacity of the branch to receive the life in the vine. Christ teaches us that it is through the action of the eternal Spirit that He is kept in this near relation to every soul. This Spirit was promised in connection with His departure from the earth, impressing the blessed truth that He is always present spiritually. The true vine continues to be in the world until all the branches which receive its life are made fruitful, — bearing the same fruit of obedience which He bore throughout the days of His suffering. The quickening life in Him, through the eternal Spirit, is ever seeking an entrance into our spirits; it is ever pressing against the inmost door of our hearts; and when we admit it, we enter into the same relation to God in which He stands. We, in our lapsed and sinful condition, have lost our consciousness of the filial feeling. The capacity is still in us, but it needs to be quickened. God calls to each one

of us, saying, "My son," but there is nothing in us which says in response, "My Father." This power to respond to the feeling of the Father's heart is what Christ gives. As soon as we receive Him, — as soon as our spirits are opened, by faith in Him, to take in that light of life which He is longing to impart, — the orphan feeling leaves us. The spirit of the child is wakened out of its sleep within us, is raised from the dead, and we cry, "Abba, Father," to the voice of God which addresses us as children. It is at first a feeble, infantile cry; the cry of a spirit just born out of darkness into the light of a Father's love. Yet the sense of loneliness, and of distance from God, is gone. The relation between father and child is restored; and, as the consciousness of that relation deepens, the cry, "Abba, Father," becomes more articulate and full. Thus, in a manner, is it that Christ gives as many as receive Him power to become the sons of God. He gives them the power. They have it in themselves to exercise under the control of their own will. They receive it as the branches receive sap from the vine, as all the members of the body receive a vitalizing energy from the head and heart. But it is their own through their abiding in Christ, and in the free exercise of it they become sons of God. The consciousness of a filial relation to God grows within them till they are filled by it. They have always been His offspring, but never before consciously such. That in them which was dead is alive again: it was lost, and is found.

Now, dear friends, if we have experienced this inward quickening, — if Christ, through the eternal Spirit, has given us the power to say, "Our Father," when we hear God calling us His children, — what is

our evidence? It is the consciousness of being faithful to the duties of this new relation of sonship. "The Spirit witnesseth with our spirit that we are the children of God." There is a loving confidence established between our hearts and the divine heart which we feel to be mutual. God, though grievously sinned against, is our friend and Father; and we come to Him with a child's open heart, confessing all, acknowledging all, grieving in His grief over our wickedness, and yielding ourselves with a full response to His own yearning, that He may make us pure even as He is pure. We have a perfect example of what this sonship is, in the life of Christ. It was His delight to do His Father's will. In Him the spirit of the child was never absent or dormant. It responded constantly to the spirit of the Father. He and the Father were one; He in the Father, and the Father in Him. The life of sonship in Him, I say, was perfect. He viewed all things just as God viewed them; felt as God felt; wished what God wished, with this only difference, — that He felt as a Son, and God as a Father, in reference to all things. We cannot expect this perfect evidence, being ourselves imperfect; but we can have it in our measure. There is something in the feeblest cry of His own child which the Father can distinguish from any cry of an alien; and there is something in the feeblest child's heart which distinguishes its own Father's voice from all other voices. "My sheep hear my voice, and follow me; but a stranger will they not follow, for they know not the voice of a stranger." We know, dear friends, how the sonship of the all-perfect Son was manifested. "He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross;" "As a Son, learned He obedience through

suffering." He entered into all the Father's yearnings over His lost family on the earth. He entered into that lapsed humanity, and, through the eternal Spirit, is still in it as a quickening and restoring power. He goes before the Father for us with that perfect confession to which we are unequal; and thus the Father's displeasure is turned away from us. What God must find in humanity, in order that His wrath toward us may cease, is a perfect response to His own feelings in view of sin. And He finds that response in Christ. And Christ not only makes that response for us, but He gives us power to make it ourselves. He quickens in us that child-feeling toward God, which is dead; and so we, following Him in the regeneration, enter into all God's feelings toward our sinful race, — our voice of confession, in its measure, responding to His voice of condemnation; our whole lives being one unbroken endeavor to do for sinning and sorrowing men what Christ did for them, who felt and did for them as a Brother just what God felt and did for them as a Father. Thus to be one with the Father and Son, loving righteousness and hating iniquity; condemning all sin and striving after all holiness; laboring when we may, and suffering when we must, to make this mind of the Father manifest to all men, that they also may believe on the name of Christ, — this is the evidence that we have received power to become the sons of God. "As many as are led by the spirit of God, they are the sons of God." Just such a spirit as was in Christ, just such a life as He lived, — differing only as its circumstances, exigencies, and opportunities differ, — belongs to every soul which has been quickened toward God, so as to be able to look up into His face and cry, "Abba, Father."

All such, but no others, as we are taught in the closing words of the text, "have been born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." This birth of God is mysterious, as all life, whether of matter or spirit, is mysterious in its beginnings. No soul should expect to be able to realize perfectly all the steps in the process by which it passes from death to life. It should be content to be without this knowledge, if so blessed as to find the evidence that it is in the life. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof; but thou canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit." "Thou hearest the sound thereof." Yes, dear brother, let that suffice. Hearing in your own heart the response to the voice of the Father's heart, having in you the same spirit of sympathy with man and obedience to God which Christ had, seek not curiously to lay open the sources of this new life. Say rather, with the man whose eyes were opened, "One thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see." And let that seeing — that walking in the light of God — be all your joy and the crown of your rejoicing. Possibly some of you, while listening to these remarks, have heard described an experience in which you cannot truly say that you have ever shared. If so; if you have never as dear children met the mind of the Father, and responded with the voice of sonship to the voice of His fatherliness, — then are you still "in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity." All your knowledge of mystery, and your faith in articles of doctrine, are nothing. You must do your first works. You must bring forth fruits meet for repentance. God looketh not on the outward appearance, — the respect-

able profession ; He looketh on the heart. He watches that heart to see in it a child's face reflecting back every feeling depicted in His own. And if there be any hearts here in which He discerns that filial likeness, they are His, and nothing shall separate them from His love. Have you received Christ? Is His holy life of obedience to the Father formed within your life? Can you say, and do you love to say, "Father, thy will be done," whatever the burden be that is laid upon you? Then do not doubt, however feeble you seem to yourself at times to be, that you have power, — power to enter more and more into the consciousness of sonship toward God. He who was touched with the feeling of your infirmities, watches over that feeble flame in your soul. Though oftentimes choked with doubt, He will not suffer it to be quenched. If you believe, He will help your unbelief. He came that you might have life, and that you might have it more abundantly. Harbor not any longer the dreary sense of orphanage. If you can truly, and in the depths of your soul, call God Father, then are you indeed His quickened child. Nor should you hide the light of this new life under a bushel, but put it on the candlestick of an open profession, that it may give light to all in the house.

Brethren in the ministry of the gospel, let us bethink ourselves, in the light of this subject, what is the nature and purpose of our holy calling. Christ labored, and we have entered into His labors. It is ours, after Him, to give unto others the power to become sons of God. That quickening energy, whose fountain-head was in Him, flows on through us unto the end of the world. "He that receiveth you receiveth me, and He that receiveth me receiveth Him

that sent me," was His saying when He sent forth the disciples to teach and preach. "Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life," was Peter's confession; and we are to utter "words of eternal life," until those who listen to us shall be constrained to confess in like manner. As Christ said, so must we be able to say, "The words which I speak unto you, they are spirit and life." Thus to speak is our divine commission, — kindling our torches at the central fire, and bearing them outward till the dark places of the earth are no more full of the habitations of cruelty, but filled with light, even the love of dear children of God. "The works which I do, shall ye do," said Christ; "and greater works than these shall ye do, because I go unto the Father." That life-giving life which was in Him, and which He has given us, we must give to others; until every soul of man shall awake, and arise from the dead, and join with us in the glad cry, "Abba, Father." Our preaching must have in it this life-giving life to the spirits of men, else how can it be the gospel of reconciliation, the glad tidings of great joy to all people? Whatever it may fail of giving, oh let it not fail to give, to as many as receive us, power to become the sons of God. I have no word to utter against the graces of style, the charms of delivery, or the weight of argument; but it is the savor of eternal life, breathed through our discourse and through all our ministering, that will quicken, and draw on to their Father's arms, His own children, now lost and dead, to whom we are sent. "And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech," said the great apostle. And again he said, "The kingdom of God is not in word, but in power." Since the words which

we speak are not mere words, but "spirit and life," our exercise of this ministry should be to us a very serious and real matter. None of the arts of speech, such as are known to the platform and forum, become us; no efforts to persuade men save those which rise out of the living truth in us. No fire, no earthquake, in which God is not, but His still small voice, speaking through ours, is that which shall cause the world to hide its face in a mantle; is that which shall enable us to reach the hearts of our Father's lost children, and return, after the Captain of our salvation, who was made perfect through suffering, bringing many sons with us into glory.

THE STRUCTURE OF THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS.

I am debtor both to the Greeks and to the Barbarians, both to the wise and to the unwise. So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the Gospel to you that are at Rome also. For I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith. — ROMANS i. 14-17.

WE are familiar with the work of Philip Doddridge entitled "The Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul." But that treatise, faithful as it is to Christian experience, has often seemed to me to stand immeasurably behind the Epistle to the Romans, in its own chosen department; as a record of the successive stages of the new life in Christ, it is far less exhaustive and powerful. We are wont to regard the Epistle to the Romans too much in the light of a theological essay; we get bewildered in its intricacies of speech, its cumulative restatements and long, double parentheses: and then, assuming that we are studying only a doctrinal discussion, we turn for relief to what are sometimes termed the simpler and more practical books of inspiration. Now this impression of difficulty in the Romans, excepting in some of the details, — this impression, though very general and sanctioned by a few distinguished names, should not be admitted too hastily. I am greatly mistaken if this is not the most thoroughly experimental, and the most intensely

practical, of all the apostle's writings. It is addressed to professing Christians mainly, and assumes that they have been thoroughly regenerated; and if we of the present day fail to understand it, the fact is sadly significant that the church has lapsed from the primitive standard of piety. As has been well said,¹ "Everything in the Epistle wears so strongly the impress of the greatest originality, liveliness, and freshness of experience; the apostle casts so sure and clear a glance into the most delicate circumstances of spiritual life in the regenerate; he can with such admirable clearness resolve the particular into the general, — that the reader who occupies the low and confined level of natural, worldly knowledge, now feels his brain reel as he gazes at those stupendous periods of development in the universe disclosed by Paul, and now finds his vision fail as it contemplates the minute and microscopic processes which Paul unveils in the hidden depth of the soul. Where, however, analogous inward experience, and the spiritual eye sharpened thereby, come to the task, the essential purport of the Epistle makes itself clear, even to the simplest mind." As we become more profoundly conscious of the inner life with Christ, and read this letter to the Romans attentively, we shall be persuaded, I think, that it is an enthusiastic portrayal of the writer's own experience — that it belongs in the same class of writings with Augustine's Confessions, the Pilgrim's Progress, and the Saint's Everlasting Rest. As the Bishop of Hippo wrote out the history of his soul in his own name, as Bunyan seems only to depict his own spiritual life in the story of the Pilgrim, and as Baxter drew from his own heart the material for his precious

¹ By Olshausen.

volume, so Paul in writing this Epistle — though his pen was guided by the Holy Ghost, and he often changes the particular into the general, and the concrete into the abstract — seems all along to be conducting his readers through the depths and windings of his own Christian experience. The preëminent value of the Epistle, as it seems to me, and that to which I invite your attention this morning, is the fact that it discloses, in its very plan and structure, the history of God's gracious dealings with a human soul. It begins with the beginning, and ends with the end, of a genuine work of grace in the heart; it gives us first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear, — the root, the stem, and the branches, and that, too, in their proper order and vital connections.

Let it be borne in mind that the apostle has for nearly a quarter of a century been a believer in Christ. The most arduous of his missionary labors are already accomplished. He is at Corinth on his second visit, the irregularities and divisions of the church in that city having at length been healed. It is the eve of his departure for Jerusalem to carry the gifts, contributed by the churches of Achaia, to the impoverished Christians of Palestine. He seems to have anticipated visiting the brethren in Rome before turning his face eastward again; and now, finding himself unable to do so, and having an opportunity to send them a message, he sits down at the last moment to dictate for them a letter of paternal fellowship and affection. The design of the Epistle is such as naturally to turn his thoughts toward himself. He feels that he is a veteran in the service of the Redeemer. The very effort to introduce himself to the Romans opens to his mind the vistas of the past. He beholds,

winding up through the avenues of memory, all the way in which Christ has led him, — from the first fiery experience in the road to Damascus, on over the three years of retirement in Arabia, into the persecutions at Jerusalem, the opening successes of his ministry in Antioch, the repeated journeyings by sea and land to found and nurture Christian churches throughout western Asia and the cities of Greece; and from this summit of mighty achievement, and attainments in holiness, — taking no credit to himself, but ascribing all to the wonderful love of Christ, — his soul gushes out in the language of joyful thanksgiving. Overwhelmed by his emotions in view of the divine mercy toward him, and eager, as ever, to show by his noble toils that he is not ungrateful to his Saviour, he exclaims, “I am debtor both to the Greeks and to the Barbarians, both to the wise and to the unwise. So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also. For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, ‘The just shall live by faith.’”

Paul’s personal experience, then, — his own redemption in Christ Jesus, now in its final stages, — is the material out of which he constructs his Epistle to the Romans. And I propose now, dropping what is subordinate to his main purpose, to represent, as far as I can, this process of salvation, which he has so wondrously delineated.

1. The first great truth which the epistle sets forth is the apostasy of man from God. Nearly the whole of the three opening chapters is occupied with this

argument. It is a reverent, manly, and forever unanswerable statement. The apostle sets out with a very forcible vindication of the goodness of God,—no wickedness, chargeable against the human race, can throw back a shadow on His throne; for He has revealed Himself to all men, making known His character and will and their obligations, the heathen even being instructed out of their own conscience and external nature, so that every one, whether Jew or Gentile, is without excuse. Having thus made mankind altogether responsible for the condition they are in, he marshals in terrible array the evidences of their depravity. Beginning with the Pagan world, that he may not startle Jewish prejudice too soon, he leads up his readers to the bar of conscience; and after they have listened to the awful condemnation of that judge, he turns their gaze outward on the barbarities, cruelties, and loathsome immoralities of the Greek and Roman cities. Then — knowing that he has by this time conciliated his Hebrew readers, who were always pleased with any denunciation of the unchosen nations — he turns the argument, with twofold weight, against the Jews themselves. Taking them upon their own ground, which was the Scriptures of the Old Testament, he piles text upon text, and overwhelms them with thick-coming interrogatories and appeals, till they are brought down into the dust side by side with all other sinners, their guilt eating into them like robes of fire, and an impassable gulf yawning between them and the holy God.

Now, why is Paul so fearfully in earnest here, — why, instead of kindly sparing his friends at Rome, does he so lacerate their sensibilities by making them appear hideous in their own eyes, — if this sad truth

of apostasy be not fundamental in any plan for saving men? To cause unnecessary pain — to bruise the human heart, and cover it with remorse, merely for the sake of the thing — is a refinement in cruelty of which the gentle-souled apostle to the Gentiles was utterly incapable. Yet it is the opening announcement in his fraternal letter to the Romans. He lays it down as the foundation, from which the other parts of the epistle, like the walls and towers of some noble temple, rise in their proper order. The fact that he chooses this as the corner-stone of the building he is rearing, and that he presents the truth in such thoroughness and compacted intensity, points to the beginnings of his own renewal in Christ Jesus. He considers it indispensable that men should see themselves undone and helpless, for it was in this conviction that his own new life had its source. Following his experience backward, as he so often has more manifestly in other places, — especially in his last address at Jerusalem, and in his defense before Agrippa, where he details with striking minuteness the circumstances of his conversion, — going back to those three days of agony in Damascus, he regards that dreadful consciousness of guilt as the foundation of all his attainments in holiness. No other supposition can clear up the mystery hanging about these first chapters of the epistle; can explain why it was that the kind-hearted old missionary, in an affectionate letter, should pour forth such a torrent of accusation against his friends. It is the character of Saul of Tarsus that he is painting, — the bloody persecutor, who might stand as the universal representative of a sinner, since the Jewish and Gentile elements were about equally blended in his parentage and training. What we read else-

where — of the light above the noonday brightness, of the voice saying, “Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?” of the three days and nights of blindness, and of the bitter conflicts of soul in the mean time — is only repeated here in a different form. The apostle knows that as in water face answers to face, so the heart of man to man. He knows, if the people of Rome are ever saved, that their redemption must begin in the same way as his own. They must be smitten down as he was smitten, and feel such agonies as drove him to the verge of despair. Therefore he dips his pen deep in the fountains of his own spiritual history. It is Saul of Tarsus still, only changed from the particular into the general, whose features he lays out on the canvas till we start back from it in guilty alarm, beholding in it the faithful picture of our own souls as they appear in the sight of God.

2. We now pass to the second main object of the epistle, which is to shut men up to faith in Christ as the way of salvation. This topic, together with the many subordinate discussions, and beautiful threads of thought and sentiment interwoven all along, occupies more than eight chapters, reaching from near the close of the third to the end of the eleventh. It presents the remedy for the disease just pointed out; and the space devoted to the prescription shows how much more the apostle was bent on rescuing men than on merely convincing them of their guilt. Having begotten in them a consciousness of their lost and miserable state, he proceeds to answer the question which it is natural that each one of them should raise, — “How shall I escape from the body of this death?” In what way shall apostate man be brought back to God? He does not go into an examination of the

Pagan worships, to show their inadequacy for this purpose, since most of his readers were already guarded in that direction ; but taking up the Jewish worship, and the systems of morality, he shows that in these no justifying power can be found for the sinner. First, we behold the self-righteous Pharisee — a picture for which the young man Saul, the pupil of Gamaliel, evidently sat — going about to establish himself in favor with God. The apostle does not allow him any rest in his legalism, but chases him from one hiding-place to another, showing him that he has misunderstood the Mosaic sacrifices, which were only a foreshadowing of Christ crucified ; pointing out the unfitness of any mere ceremonies to please a holy God ; proving that Abraham was not justified by the works of the law ; confronting the deluded formalist with his many shortcomings ; showing the righteous man that his very righteousness is full of sin, that there is a burden of past transgressions resting upon him, and that he has an evil nature rooting back into the progenitor of the race. He describes, in language that burns and flames, the struggle between the lower and higher nature in the soul of the moralist. That poor man is resolved to live a perfect life, but though the spirit is willing the flesh is weak. When he would do good, evil is present with him. Notwithstanding all his strivings and cautions, his life does not come up to the moral standard ; and the consciousness of failure discourages and maddens him, so that the law becomes to him the minister of sin. His high resolve, though ordained unto life, tends only to despair, apathy, and death. This ever-failing effort is depicted in the sixth chapter, and nearly through the seventh ; when the exult-

ant writer, having swept away all the theories of creature-merit and self-redemption, looks up out of the tumbling wreck he has made, and exclaims, "I thank God for deliverance through the Lord Jesus Christ." The great thing and the only thing for us to do, in order that we may be restored to the embraces of the Father, is to trust ourselves unquestioningly in the hands of Christ. Oh, how the apostle's soul mounts aloft, after bringing his readers to this glorious truth! It is the heaven-piercing summit of his mighty argument, over which he hovers, and round which he circles and sails, brushing against it with ardent wing, reposing himself upon it, and wearing its splendors through all that he has to say of guilt, the law, conflicts, unfaithful Israel, the election of God, and a holy life. The eighth chapter, in which he pours forth his gladness and thanksgivings, is an unparalleled specimen of fervid and soaring eloquence. How calm, yet triumphing, the opening sentence! — "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit; for the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." "Hath made me free" is the glorious thought which swells and resounds throughout the chapter. The remembrance of that blessed relief, which rolled into his soul like sweet waters when he found himself in the keeping of Christ, is so mighty that it throws him off his guard. He cannot hide his personality while such recollections are heaving his breast. Swimming in the tide of this delicious excitement, he forgets his more general purpose; and we behold the new-born disciple, in the moment when there fell as it were scales from his eyes, standing

before us in all the simplicity of a babe in Christ, and declaring what God has done for his soul. Once he roamed, and was tossed about on the dark ocean of guilt. He had tried morality, he tried conformity to the Mosaic rites; but they brought no safety: the storm still buffeted him, and he could find no way to a landing-place. But at length he found Christ, who is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth. He heard that voice — so thrilling and tender — saying, “Come unto Me, I will give you rest.” Have no more concern about your peace with God, but leave it all to me. Accept me for your Saviour, to deliver you from punishment, and from your fears and sins, and to restore you, a purified soul, to the arms of the Holy One. This was just the aid that Paul needed. It was a peaceful harbor, close beside him, in which he might moor his failing bark. He gave over the idea of self-help; and, trusting himself utterly and forever in Christ’s hands, he ceased to strive. He reposed his weary heart on that gentle bosom. He gave himself up to those blissful emotions which naturally arose while feeling that all his care had been cast on a divine Redeemer. Nothing but his own lofty utterances can describe the joy of his soul: “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

3. The remainder of the epistle, excepting the salutations in the last chapter, is devoted to the inculcation of the Christian virtues. And it is important, especially for those who object to the doctrine of gratuitous salvation, to see how Paul grafts these virtues into the very act of faith in Christ. So far from granting us any license, as though we might be careless about our morals since Christ is our Saviour, he no sooner ends the exultant narrative of his justification by faith than he calls out, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." It does not occur to him that there is any conflict between his doctrine of faith and a holy life. He passes from one to the other with a simple "therefore," unaware of abruptness, perceiving no antagonism or incongruity. The stream of thought flows on uninterruptedly, — from conviction of sin to faith in Christ, and from faith to good works. "Ye were once apostate from God. A deep gulf lay between you and Him, and you found no way of reaching His side. But Christ, the great Mediator, — who bridges the chasm and destroys the enmity, — has now taken you into His keeping. Trusting yourselves utterly to Him, you have no further care respecting your destiny; but may calmly wait the revelations of the future, knowing that He will present you faultless before His Father. Therefore be not worldly, but of a heavenly mind; show in all your conduct what is the perfect will of God; think soberly, each one, of his personal importance; find out and perform the special Christian labor to which the Master has assigned you; be under the control of a steady and undissembled love; dili-

gent, fervent, hopeful, patient, beneficent, forgiving, sympathetic, forbearing, lovers of peace, honorable, humble, unresentful, overcoming evil with good; respect the civil authority, so far as it is the minister of God; have that universal love out of which all the specific Christian graces spring; deny yourselves, even where your own conscience does not urge to the sacrifice, rather than be a stumbling-block to some weaker brother; remember that it is the duty of the strong, not to please themselves, but to help the weak; pray without ceasing, — for me, for one another, and for all men.” Faith, then, — that faith which Paul recommends, and which puts the soul in the keeping of Christ its Saviour, — is not an unworking sentiment, but includes in it all that is holy and beautiful in character. When a child has wandered off into the wilderness and is lost; when, having yielded to despair after repeated but fruitless endeavors to find the way home, it at length hears a mother’s voice echoing through the gloomy forest, — if that child is really sick of its roaming, if it truly longs to return, and in sincerity yields itself to that loving call, — earnestness and action possess it at once. It does not lie still, carelessly saying, “I have faith in my mother; she will save me, and therefore I need do nothing.” He starts up straightway, answers the voice, ascertains its direction, and presses eagerly toward it. Just so it was with the great apostle; and so it is with all who sincerely trust in Jesus. We have strayed, like lost sheep, into the wilderness of the world. The Holy Ghost comes, startling us from our lethargy, and showing us that we are lost wanderers; and then it is that we turn to morality, and to the external forms and duties of religion, for peace with God. But these

have no power to rescue us; they only increase the dreadful bewilderment. Then we hear the voice of the Shepherd, full of all the sweetness and pathos of a mother's love, borne into the still depths of the woods, and saying, "Fear not; I am thy righteousness; trust all to Me, and I will bring thee home." And if we heartily believe in that Saviour, we do not indolently stay where we are, but rise up, exclaiming eagerly, "Lord, show us the way, that we walk in it." Our faith causes us to follow after Him, and He goes on before us; and though we see Him not, yet we hear Him, bidding us do this and refrain from that; and these commandments are the way along which He leads us to our Father's house. The path is very various in its appearance, not direct though strait and narrow, turning now hither and now thither, yet always leading heavenward. Here is the path of Humility, and out of that we go into one which bears the name of Self-sacrifice; and beyond that is the way of Well-doing; and then come such as Family Prayer, Honesty in Business, Liberality, Charity, a Meek and Quiet Spirit, Secret Devotion, Meditation, Study of God's Word, Keeping the Covenant, Adorning the Doctrine of our Saviour. These are the titles, set up at the entrances and corners all the way; and if we have that faith which puts us in Christ's keeping, we shall not shrink at any stage of the journey, however steep, or slippery, or dismal it may seem: we shall hear the voice of one behind us, speaking to us and saying, "This is the way, walk ye in it;" and we shall follow hard after the divine Pattern who has gone before us, till at length that very faith, which led us to confide everything to the Redeemer, shall develop in our life whatsoever is honest and lovely and of good

report, and if there be any virtue or any praise. As I contemplate the experience of the noble apostle, which is the substance and soul of this epistle, it seems to me like some fair and thrifty tree, — erect, crowned with a broad coronal of green, and loaded with golden fruitage. In the first three chapters we discover its root, which is the awful sense of guilt, wide-spreading and thrust far down into the soil of conscience; out of this, not arbitrarily, but by the beautiful force of nature, springs the living trunk of faith in a crucified Redeemer; and as the root, which was penitence, unfolded into the trunk, which was faith, so faith, by the same blessed necessity, spreads out into an ample, and leafy, and fruit-laden covering, — the glorious canopy of a holy life made up of all the virtues and graces that are possible to a human soul. The structure is threefold in its forms of development, and yet it is a single organism, dependent on a single life, from the lowest rootlet to the utmost and topmost branch. It is all wrapped up in the feeling of penitence, like the oak in the acorn, or like the flower in the seed. The conviction of sin, self-condemnation, a heart-crushing sense of guilt in the sight of God, is the one essential thing. From this our religious experience must spring, or it can never put on a glorious maturity. It is almost useless to preach Christ crucified, or to inculcate the moral and religious virtues, where this foundation — a broken and contrite spirit — has not been laid. But when He, whose office it is to convince of sin, righteousness, and judgment to come, — when He opens the closed eye of the soul, and draws around it in distinct outline the claims of the law of God, till we discover our helplessness, and begin to sink, like Simon Peter, in the tempestuous sea of guilt, — then,

if we can discern the form of Christ coming toward us walking on the stormy billows, it is easy enough for our despair to change into absolute faith. And when He has stilled the tempest, and taken us in charge, and assured us that we have nothing more to be anxious about; that He will see us moored at length in the haven of eternal rest, — then we are His to command, His to send whithersoever He will, His to bear such burdens as He may be pleased to lay upon us: and we would rather that our right hand should forget its cunning, and our tongue cleave unto the roof of our mouth, — rather that our heart should cease its beating, and we be laid under the clods of the valley, — than that we should ever shrink from the least of our obligations, or stain His name with the slightest dishonor.

THE SUFFERING SAVIOUR.

It pleased the Lord to bruise Him. — ISAIAH liii. 10.

THE prophetic book in which these words are written is admitted to be Messianic. It foretells the sufferings and the glories of that coming Deliverer, the vision of whose kingdom had been the solace of God's people in all ages of the world. The personage here spoken of is that seed of the woman which should bruise the serpent's head: to Him Eve referred when she exclaimed with rapture, "I have gotten a man from the Lord." The bow in the cloud, assuring Noah that the world should not again be drowned, was the symbol of His peaceful reign. When God spoke to Abraham in Mount Moriah, saying, "Lay not thine hand on the lad," the patriarch knew that his son Isaac escaped by the procuring of another victim. "The Lord will provide," was his grateful exclamation. And the ram caught in the thicket was a type of the great sacrifice that should be offered once for all. The coming Deliverer, whom the text introduces to us as a bruised victim, is the same who went with the Israelites through the desert in His pillar of cloud and fire; is that mighty Potentate whom the Psalmist repeatedly extols, now as the Son that should have the heathen for His inheritance, now as the God whose throne is forever and ever, always as a sovereign King, whose sceptre was a sceptre of righteousness, who had been anointed with

the oil of gladness above His fellows, who should thresh the heathen in His indignation, to whom every knee should bow, and of whose government there should be no end.

But in the scripture before us, all this regal splendor is wanting. The promised Messiah, laying aside His royal robes and the insignia of dominion, appears as "the Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." He is the despised and rejected One. Those whom He comes to save hide their faces from Him. His visage is more marred than any man's. And that no bitter ingredient may be wanting in the full cup of suffering which He drinks, it is declared that God afflicts Him; and not only that, but that "it pleased the Lord to bruise Him." The suffering Saviour is therefore offered to us, in this scripture, as a theme for our meditations. And we shall be able to comprehend the meaning of the scripture somewhat, perhaps, if we consider Christ's sufferings under three heads; namely, the fact, its wonderfulness, and the explanation of it.

First, as to the fact: the force, as shown by recorded history, of the fact that Christ suffered. Undoubtedly this suffering had in it elements which we cannot fully know; divine elements inappreciable to human sense, holy elements inappreciable to beings yet unholy. There is in all divine experiences something which our minds cannot fully comprehend. "The love of God passeth knowledge." And when we speak of the divine nature as "suffering," it cannot be such suffering as we often experience, but such as consists with God's own immutable blessedness, — the suffering of infinite love and power, and therefore purely moral and voluntary in its nature, so that there

may be in it, even while it does not cease to be suffering, an unspeakable joy and pleasure. Such was Christ's suffering; a suffering full of divine blessedness, yet bearing down with its weight the poor humanity He took, so that no sorrow could be like His sorrow. This bruising which He underwent, we may know only in part.

It began with His appearance in the flesh; nay, before that, for He is "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world;" and it continued through all His life in the flesh, not growing less but greater and intenser, even to the last bitter hour on Calvary; and an apostle intimates that even now, though exalted, He is touched with the feeling of our infirmities. His throne is still but the throne of a mediatorial kingdom; and mediation between sin and holiness cannot be real save as it involves suffering. But we need not go back to the ages before the incarnation, nor strive to peer within the veil where our great High Priest is now entered for us. There is enough, and more than enough, in the lot which Christ bore while in the flesh, to make good the prophetic picture of Him as the bruised and forsaken Man of grief.

The circumstances of His birth, — among strangers, at a public inn, while His parents were on a journey, objects of idle curiosity, no doubt also of pity and of scorn; poor people, not admitted among the better-conditioned guests, but sheltered with the feeding oxen, — here, at His very entrance on life, was something of the nature of calamity; a despised and unfriended lot, such as no man would choose for the hour of his nativity. I am sure that any one here, looking back on such scenes at his birth, would be saddened. Yet this is not the darkest ingredient in

the cloud of sorrow that overspread Christ's infancy. Nor was the flight into Egypt, and the sojourning there in lowly obscurity, what especially marked His first years as troubled beyond the common lot. He could not think of those years without remembering the infants whom Herod had slain on His account, — "all the children in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under." Possibly it was the remembrance of this slaughter, this martyrdom of the innocents for His sake, that made Him so especially tender toward little children through life; taking them up in His arms, blessing them, saying that of such is the kingdom of heaven, and that it were better to be drowned in the sea than offend one such. Surely, we anticipate, the life on whose beginning such a cloud rested ought to brighten as it wears on. But no, the gloom deepens. And so far from any silver lining, to be turned out to view after a while, it is surcharged with tempestuous elements, which gather volume steadily till at last they burst forth in overwhelming fury on that devoted head. He seems not to have lived in any near and comforting sympathy with His own family. Notwithstanding the words which the angel spoke to Mary, and Joseph's dream, they were too human, too much like us, to follow their child with unwavering and loyal hearts, while He disappointed all their little plans concerning Him, and went about "His Father's business." Not only was it His lot to pursue a course which thus alienated His nearest kindred, but He must make himself an object of wrath to His neighbors among whom He had been brought up. He was so much disliked by them that they sought His life on the Sabbath day when He ventured to announce Himself to them as the predicted

Messiah ; and He went and dwelt in Capernaum, being without honor in His own country. And this turning against Him of His kindred and neighbors was not so painful as soon befell Him on a broader scale. The whole nation of the Jews, so far as it had any influence or authority, rejected Him, and counted Him an enemy. None but the outcast classes, and a few friends chosen from humble life, clung to Him amid the oppositions of the great. And even these were swerved from their allegiance by the drift of open hostility ; disciples not daring to reply to the false accusations of the Pharisees, one denying Him, another betraying Him, all forsaking Him in the bitter hour when His hard lot drew to its climax in the garden and judgment hall, and beneath the weight of His own cross in the way to Calvary.

We all know the story of His bruising, so that it need not be here recounted any further. And besides this more manifest suffering, which came on Him from without, was that inward pain of the spirit, bitterest of all, which consisted in His bearing our sins, and carrying our sorrows on His heart of infinite love. Christ so entered into our humanity as to be our Brother, — the perfect and sinless Brother of all the world. That brotherliness in Him must needs have caused that our guilt and woe should be to Him a source of infinite anguish. They are His brethren, and He is not ashamed to call them such, who have broken the laws of God, who are living and rioting in that sin which God abhors. It is in their behalf, His tender relationship to them bringing the awful load of their shame on His divine heart, that He answers to eternal justice, and meets the condemnation launched against them. This brotherliness, this oneness with

all sinners, so that their shame became His shame, was more than everything outward which embittered His lot. This made His soul exceeding sorrowful even unto death; this caused Him to sweat great drops of blood in the agony that bowed Him to the ground. Comprehending this relation of Christ to us as a brother, and knowing how vividly conscious He was of being one with us in all our sorrows and sins, we begin to see that no other bruising could be like that which it pleased God to inflict on Him. This being the brother of a rebellious race, and confessing himself such while He is without sin, is what singles out Christ, from all that have ever lived on the earth, as peculiarly the burdened, and bruised, and rejected, and stricken One. As of His love, so of His suffering we may say that in the length and breadth and height thereof, it passeth knowledge. But this is not the whole of the fact we are called to contemplate. This bruising, such as none other ever endured, is traced to God's agency: "It pleased the Lord to bruise Him." Not that Christ suffered against His own will. He freely chose to bear the chastisement of our peace. He laid down His life of Himself. That Christ suffered freely in our behalf, because He wished to, is clear from the nature of the suffering. That suffering consisted peculiarly in His sympathy with us as our Brother; and such sympathy is always one's own act, it cannot be put upon him by the act of another. Yet His choosing to be bruised does not exclude the agency of the Father. The sword awaketh against his fellow, and smiteth the good Shepherd who giveth His life for the sheep. Accordingly, all the wrath of Christ's foes, and their mocking and crucifying Him, are said to be in fulfillment of the Father's will. Peter, preach-

ing to the multitude on the day of Pentecost, said, "Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain." And Christ Himself, in alluding to His sufferings, connects them always with the divine agency, — declaring that only thus could He fulfill the prophecies concerning Him, or finish the work given Him by his Father, or be the Saviour promised from the beginning. So, then, the fact which we are called to contemplate is that of Christ enduring this hard lot, and all this unutterable anguish of heart, as laid on Him by the eternal purpose and prearrangement of the Lord, whom it pleased to bruise Him.

This brings us to our second head, the wonderfulness of the fact that Christ should thus suffer. In dwelling on the word "pleased," in the text, we should be careful, I think, not to press its meaning. That it really gave pleasure to God to inflict pain on Christ, is an idea which the Bible nowhere warrants. The word must be understood as we often understand it in our intercourse with one another. A man may say that it pleases him to do a thing, though the doing it is very painful to him. What he means is, that on the whole, or from a sense of duty, he chooses to do it. Thus it often pleases a general to order his troops into battle; and yet tears of anguish will fill his eyes as he sees their line shriveling up in the enemy's fire. It pleases him only in the sense that he decides it to be his duty. We might say, without danger of being misunderstood, that it pleased the court to pass sentence of death on the prisoner. It was anything but a pleasure to them. They did it with a feeling of awe, and out of regard to the sacredness of justice;

nor is anything beyond this implied, though we say that "it pleased them." Only in some such way could it have pleased God to bruise the Messiah. He decided to do it; to let that Mediator, who stood ready for the exigency, go down into the condemnation which had passed on all men. Seeing what woe must happen by sparing Him, and what holiness and bliss would come by offering Him up, He chose to bruise Him. "It pleased Him;" *i. e.*, he saw it to be fit and proper, and therefore did it, against the yearnings of His Father's heart, "that He might be just and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus."

But with this explanation the fact is still wonderful. We are astonished in view of Christ's sufferings, not only on account of their peculiar nature and their vastness, but that God should even choose to let Him endure them. There was in the Father no cruelty, no hard-heartedness; yet how wonderful that He should allow such a fate to overtake the Son! This wonder will grow upon us as we consider the following:

1. The character of Christ. He was the Sinless One; did no sin, and no guile was found in His mouth. Was He ever angry, filled with indignation? Yes; but it was only the flowing forth of infinite love against wickedness. Pilate could find no fault in Him. All his adversaries were ashamed. "Never man spake like this man," was the report of the officers sent to take Him. What outcast, what enemy was He not ready to befriend, and to help in all tenderest and most graceful ways? Of whom did He ever complain? What weak soul ever bruise, what strong man ever flatter to his hurt? And for such an One this cup of woe was mixed; nor might it pass from Him except He drink it. We can understand why the imperfect,

the groveling, the sinful, should be afflicted. Such chastisement comports with their character, and may be to them a useful discipline. But why this Man? Why should He, whose going about was only to do good, so that the whole world was made sweet by His one life, — why should He, above all others, be put to grief, till His soul was poured out unto death?

2. This bruising is wonderful, also, as we think on the character of God. He is a God of love, whom it pleased to so bruise this Holy One. Wonderful that His sword should awake against His fellow; against One who declared His name, whose meat and drink was to do His will! This merciful God, so gracious to the disobedient even, forgiving iniquity and sin, making His sun to shine on the evil, sending His rain on the unjust, — such a God chooses to afflict, in the awful manner described, One who never disobeyed, who needed not to be forgiven, who was Himself kind to the unthankful, and did good hoping for nothing again. Is it true that God does not willingly afflict nor grieve the children of men? Could He endure, with much long-suffering, the vessels of wrath fitted for destruction? Was He so patient with the cities of the plain, hearkening to the prayer of Abraham in their behalf? Did He spare Nineveh, the cup of whose iniquity was full? Had He no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but would rather that they should turn and live? Protesting at the sin of Israel, and saying, “How shall I give thee up, Ephraim?” Sparing His people when they murmured against Him in the desert; when they forgot Him, and turned to false gods, in Canaan. Remembering David in his affliction. All along from the beginning, in such various and affecting ways, repenting

the evil He thought to do, and doing it not. How our wonder grows, after tracing God's tender mercy as manifested toward the ill-deserving, if we then consider the agony He permitted to come upon the sinless and Just One! What a shock to our feelings, what a revulsion, how strangely inconsistent, how out of keeping with all that we elsewhere see of the righteousness, and pity, and much-enduring mercy of our God! "It pleased the Lord to bruise Him;" to bruise the holy, though he forgave the unholy; to smite the Sinless, while he bore with the sinning; to afflict the Righteous One whom He loves, though sparing the wicked whom He abhors.

3. And still our wonder grows as we consider again the relation of Christ and God to each other as Father and Son. Not only is it true, on the one hand, that Christ did no sin, and on the other hand that God is love, but the cord of affection which unites God to Christ is infinitely more tender than that which unites Him to the sinful creatures whom He spares. This truth is taught us all through the Bible. Though the Father so afflicts the Son, yet He seems to take especial care that we may have no cause to doubt His supreme love for the Son. The angels are ministering spirits, and man is made lower than the angels; but not so Christ. Of Him God says, "Thou art my Son." And when He bringeth Him forth, He saith, "Let all the angels of God worship Him." When He came up out of the water, the testimony of God to Him was, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." And to the same effect Christ himself saith, "The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into His hands." And again, "No man knoweth the Father but the Son; nor any man the Son

save the Father." That it was a thing altogether wonderful in God thus to bruise His Only-begotten, the darling of his bosom, seems to be assumed by Paul, where He says, "If God spared not His own Son, but offered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" From beginning to end, therefore, we find only cause of amazement in the afflictions of Christ. The whole process of this bruising confounds us; it is just the opposite of what we should expect; our wonder is all the time increasing, as we follow it on step by step. It was a dreadful load that Christ endured in becoming our brother so as to bear the sins of the world. We are astonished that any being, whatever his deserts, should thus bear our shame on his single heart. How amazing, then, that Christ, who deserved only the rewards of perfect holiness, should endure this load! Nay, that He should endure it while the unholy were spared, forgiven, lovingly entreated! And all this, too, by the eternal purpose and foreknowledge of God, whom it pleased thus to bruise Him! The God who is love, and who loveth righteousness and hateth iniquity, — oh, how strange that He should not spare His own Son whom He loved, and who loved Him, and came to do His will, but should yield Him up, out of His Father's bosom, to be despised and rejected, to be numbered with transgressors, to make His grave with the wicked, after being obedient unto death, even the death of the cross!

And thus we come to the third head of our discourse. We come confounded at this great mystery of suffering; and we ask eagerly, and with troubled hearts, how it can be explained that God was pleased thus to bruise His Son? Why was He put to grief till

there was no sorrow like His sorrow? Why was He taken from judgment and brought down into the dust of death, leaving no one to declare His generation? Ah, my brother-men! the answer is at hand. His soul was made an offering for sin. It was His great office, His singular and sublime work, to be the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world. By Him lost men were to have access unto the Father, through a door which no man could shut, in which new and living way they might come boldly to a throne of grace. His taking this load upon Him and bearing it till He fulfilled the Father's will, earned for Him a name which is the only name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved.

We therefore explain one wonder by adducing another and greater wonder. That greater wonder is SIN, under which we all lie spiritually dead before God. Great is the mystery of godliness; and the only key to it is the greater mystery of iniquity. Wonderful the story of our redemption; but far more wonderful our apostasy, which calls for that redemption. In saying this, I do but give you the testimony of the Spirit himself. My brethren, it hath not yet entered into the heart even of the holiest man, to conceive how dreadful a thing sin is in the sight of God, as the Father sees it and as the Son sees it. Are the sufferings of Christ wonderful? But of sin God saith, in Jeremiah, "A wonderful and horrible thing is committed in the land." No man has yet been found who could endure the sight of his own guilt when he saw it in the light in which it is seen by Christ and God. Adam could not. He fled at the bare hearing of the voice of the Lord among the trees of the garden. That angel at the gate of Eden, warning him away into the

desert, was but the word of God laying open to him his guilty heart. What are we to understand by that mark set on the forehead of Cain, and the awful dread of vengeance which pursued him wherever he went? These were God's seal to the dreadful nature of sin. "Man hath sinned," was the bitter cry which wailed and sobbed through the universe; and the direful nature of the calamity thus announced was but feebly figured forth in the garment of mourning that immediately covered every creature of God. Innocency had died; and the holy Creator clothed His children in sackcloth as a faint emblem of that woful death. The sacred writers strive, by all the powers of language, to make us comprehend God's awful abhorrence of sin. That abhorrence is signified in the curse pronounced on the tempter and the sinning pair, in the shooting-up of the briars and thorns to mar the fair face of the ground, in representing death and all the evils of our earthly lot as the fruit of sin, in cutting short the term of human life with the declaration that His spirit should not always strive with man, in the flood that rose over the sin-smitten world burying its highest mountains from His pure sight. The bondage in Egypt, the wanderings in the great and terrible wilderness, the temple service, the costly sacrifices, the dreadful calamities, the wearisome ceremonial by which alone the high-priest even might approach the mercy-seat and live, — all these things are a language, and they all struggle together, as it were ten thousand tongues of preternatural eloquence, if by any means they may make us understand what is the length and breadth and height and depth, of the loathing and abhorrence which God hath against sin. Only a few men, the holiest, the best, such as God especially

avored with His revelations, have been permitted to come into sympathy with Him in this respect, to see sin as He sees it, and to feel how horrible a thing it is. David was thus favored once, and the revelation was more than he could bear. He found no words fearful enough in which to utter his overwhelming sense of guilt. The greatest of the prophets, Isaiah, having for one moment seen the Lord of hosts, fell down in the temple, crying out, "Woe is me, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell among a people of unclean lips." In that one awful moment, while the glory of God's presence was shining about him, sin appeared as the one hateful and horrible thing, the distilled essence of all other evils, whether actual or possible. And his dreadful experience was but a repetition of that of Job, the upright man of the land of the East, in whom God so delighted, — who, when he came before God, saw for the first time the unspeakable hatefulness of sin; and then even he, who had stood stoutly up in his integrity, was forced to cry, "I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." In like manner Peter, in the fishing-boat, receiving upon his conscience a momentary flash from God's judgment against sin, could not stand upright, but fell down, and cried, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." And again, when he fled from the Lord's reproving look, standing as it were at God's seat, and beholding his fault with the eye of infinite purity, "he went out and wept bitterly." So Paul, though he was alive once, that is, in a comfortable, easy state of mind, while he saw not his sin in the light of God's throne, tells us that when the commandment came, sin revived, and he died. Seeing his sin as God saw it, he exclaimed, "O wretched man that I am, who shall

deliver me from the body of this death!" And that picture in the Apocalypse, where the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the mighty men go into dens and caves, and call on the rocks and mountains to cover them, and hide them from Him that sitteth on the throne, — that appalling scene does but picture to us what our own feelings of self-aborrence will be when we come to an adequate conception of the evil of sin. Nor are those wailings and gnashings of teeth, the sound of which is ever ascending out of the abodes of the lost, a whit too terrible to impress on our minds, not the stern and cruel vengeance of God, as some would try to believe, but the real nature of sin, whose awful consequences it is not in the power of language or imagery adequately to express.

Here now we have at length, towering up before us in dim but dreadful outline, the fact which the Father and Son beheld. The fact of sin rose before them like a great mountain; and its shadow lay, like a funeral pall, over all the world. And it pleased the Father to bruise the Son, because by that bruising the mountain would be removed, and be cast into the sea. And here it is that we come at last to the explanation for which we have looked. The incarnation and death of Christ are no longer a mystery. They are explained by the greater and darker mystery of sin. In view of the dreadful enemy which had broken loose among men, the wonder would be rather at the Father's not bruising the Son, if by such bruising that enemy may be stopped in his course, and forever destroyed. How shall a holy God not be pleased to see His Son suffer, and that consenting Son not gladly accept the suffering, if He may thus sweep this kingdom of darkness from the world, and bring down

to men, out of heaven from God, the New Jerusalem, that the beauty thereof may fill the earth ?

In what manner it is that Christ, by the mystery of His suffering, removes the greater mystery of sin, I have already intimated, but only intimated. Nor can I here set forth the wonderful process of our deliverance from sin, except to say that the secret of the great escape seems to me to lie in the truth of the brotherhood of Christ. Our redemption begins in the fact that Christ is not ashamed to call us His brethren. He came in the likeness of sinful flesh. He took our humanity upon Him ; and thus, as a brother in a brother's stead, He tasted death for every man. His sympathy was so perfect that He bore all our grief and shame on His one brotherly heart. And with that load of guilt upon Him, He met the condemnation which had gone forth against it, and in which He had consented with the Father. This was the atonement, the obtaining of forgiveness for us ; the reconciliation of the world to God, through Christ, in whom the Father was. And it is by our clinging to Him, as sinning brothers to their elder Brother who has obtained eternal redemption for them, that the power of an obedient life which is in Him becomes ours ; by our clinging to Him that we receive the gift of the Spirit which rests upon Him without measure, till we put down the motions of sin within us, and overcome everything which opposeth itself to us, standing complete in holiness, and being filled with all the fullness of God.

And now, my brethren, seeing that the bruising of Christ is not at all wonderful, but just what we might expect of Him and the Father in their desire to destroy sin, what manner of persons ought we to be in

all holy conversation and godliness? Are we, by our daily sins, creating that greater wonder which explains the lesser wonder of the sufferings of Christ? Are we, by continuing in sin, making ourselves verily guilty of the body and blood of Christ? Is it hard for us to comprehend the mystery of the cross of Christ? Who then shall be able to give a reason for the sin we willfully commit, which sin lifted up the cross, and drove the nails, and thrust the spear? Oh, how wonderful, and to all holy beings how shocking, if, while claiming to be members of that suffering Saviour's body, we are not gladly filling up what is behind of His sufferings; not only keeping our own souls unspotted from the world, but daily presenting ourselves a living sacrifice, if by any means we may do something to rid the universe of that mystery of mysteries which weighed down the Son of God with agony in the Garden, and bowed His royal head on Calvary, till the heavens were dark with grief, and bursting rocks testified that no sorrow could be like His sorrow!

A LAW OF PROGRESS.

And He gave him none inheritance in it, no, not so much as to set his foot on. — ACTS vii. 5.

I WISH to speak, in this sermon, of a curious fact which pertains to nearly all human progress ; the fact, namely, that in such progress there is a double movement, — first, a sudden purpose centring itself somewhere in the future, and then a slow process of actual advance up to that centre. It is not absurd or paradoxical, but strictly accurate, to say that a man makes progress by first getting ahead of himself, and then catching up with himself. Nor is this fact, or law governing human progress, a thing of recent discovery ; for it was an early English poet who wrote the striking and oft-quoted lines, —

“ Unless above himself he can
Erect himself, how poor a thing is man ! ”

This power to go ahead of himself in purpose, and then to overtake himself in actual achievement, is what makes man a progressive being ; it is a power which distinguishes him from the lower orders of creatures. The two parts of this double movement are alike necessary : without the purpose the actual advance is never made ; and the purpose will not lift one, or draw him forward, save as his steady action moves on to overtake it.

Let me first give some illustrations of the fact or law now noticed, and then show how it pertains to our religious duties.

1. The case of Abraham, referred to in our text, is in point. Abraham, says Stephen in his address to the Sanhedrin, came out of the land of the Chaldeans and dwelt in Charran ; and from thence, when his father was dead, God removed him into this land, wherein ye now dwell. "And He gave him none inheritance in it, no, not so much as to set his foot on ; yet He promised that He would give it to him for a possession, and to his seed after him, when as yet he had no child." If we turn back to the history of Abraham, in the Book of Genesis, we shall find this statement fully borne out. He obtained but the title to his inheritance when he first went into Canaan. He then conceived a hope and a purpose, which planted his foot far forward in the future, but slow ages were to wear away, and many reverses come on him and his descendants, before that hope and purpose were fulfilled. Abraham came, an utter stranger, while the Canaanite yet dwelt in the land ; and his movements show that he fully believed God's promise concerning him. He passed through the land to Sichem, near the place where our Lord met the woman at the well more than two thousand years afterwards. There he builded an altar unto the Lord. Now the ancient Hebrews were not wont to build altars on foreign soil. Where their altars were, there were their homes, and wives, and little ones, and there all their earthly possessions centred. It therefore meant a great deal to Abraham when he built an altar near Sichem. It meant that he looked on the land as his, though the Canaanites still held it, though not enough of it to set foot on was yet actually his own. This actual state of things Abraham recognized at all times. He did not interfere with the rights of

property. Years afterwards, when Sarah died and he sought a burial-place for her, he applied to Ephron, who owned the spot of ground which he desired, and for it weighed him four hundred shekels of silver, current money with the merchant. Yet there stood his altars; for already, since erecting the one at Sichem, he had built at least two others,—one at Bethel, and one in the plain of Mamre, which is in Hebron. Thus did he think of the whole land as his, while as yet it was not his. He was a stranger and sojourner in it. In time of famine he left it, and went to live in Egypt. He built no city, but dwelt in tents. His altars, and the cave of Machpelah, were the proofs of his strong faith. They anchored him to a distant future. And so sure was he that God who had promised him the possession would fulfill His promise, that he took no unfair means to obtain the prize. He patiently waited, and obeyed God, not doubting that his great hope would be overtaken. He made over the richest portion of the land to his kinsman Lot, rather than be at strife with him. And when the life of Isaac, in whom his hopes centred, was threatened, he did not seek to turn aside the fatal stroke. Abraham never made haste, or grew impatient, or murmured concerning the promise. He obeyed God, whom he believed; he was just to all men, not seizing the inheritance, but calmly waiting till God should give it to him. His faith that the whole of Canaan should be his, and that it should be full of his descendants, was like a strong hand coming out of the distant future, taking hold of him, and drawing and guiding him forward. He did not waver, and he did not doubt. Though he died without the sight, yet he died believing. The first step toward his own progress,

and that of his nation, having been taken, he did not fall back from it. The cord of faith which held him, and his children after him, did not break, but drew them steadily on until they overtook their hope and purpose under Joshua.

2. Another instance of this double movement — first an expectation and purpose, and then a slow advance till it is overtaken — may be seen in the history of the Israelites after they had become a nation. They went down into Egypt in the days of Joseph, and there were reduced to slavery. Centuries of bondage blinded them to their great future, though they still held together. At length Moses came, called to his task in a miraculous manner, to remind Israel of that great hope not yet overtaken. At first they would not believe him, but God gradually gave him their confidence; and now we see that whole people, as with one heart, fired by a sudden purpose. They will achieve liberty, they will repossess their long-lost inheritance. If there had been visible cords stretching from Canaan, and laying hold of them all, they could not have been drawn more surely than they were toward that land. But how slow their progress, and how often they looked backward after crossing the Red Sea! They had the weaknesses which we might expect from their life in Egypt, and only the strong faith of Moses held them to their purpose. But when they had crossed the Jordan, and built their altars in the plain toward Jericho, the land was not theirs by possession. The deed had still to overtake the purpose. They had set up their standard far in advance, and now they must march forward to it. Joshua died, the Judges all died. There were many victories and many defeats. The Lord chastised them sorely

for their sins. Samuel and Saul arose and passed away; and David sat on the throne at Jerusalem, before the achievement had caught up with the expectation. And even then the ideal conquest of Canaan had not taken place; for the Canaanite still dwelt in the land, nor did his idolatries wholly cease out of it. The Israelites began to learn, as the hope of the Messiah more clearly dawned on them, that their true greatness was not to be temporal but spiritual. This hope now took full possession of them. It drew them onward, especially in their prophets and other holy men, toward a purer and stronger grasp of their destiny under God. But some of them changed the nature of that coming glory in their thoughts, so that they did not know it when it appeared; and hence they fell back from it, and were weakened and destroyed. Others, seeing more clearly what Christ was to be to them and the world, recognized Him when He came, and were lifted by Him to a new plane of hopes and expectations, at sight of which all the past grew dim in their eyes.

3. The American nation was at first only a purpose; nor has that purpose even yet been overtaken, — we may doubt if it ever will be. “All men are created free and equal,” was the mark which its founders set up. But they knew that that mark was far before them. They utterly failed to reach it when they came to organize the government; and so far short of it did their successors threescore years after them come, that it was ridiculed as impracticable and visionary. It was an ideal; and it may never become real in any actual sense. But it is the goal and guiding star of the nation, standing far off in the future, laying its line of light across all that was to

be or is to be of convulsion and bloodshed, and holding up the hearts of those who would make the last result answer to the first promise. How little time it took to set up that far-off standard which has so fired the imaginations of patriots! How slow and toil-some, amid fierce struggles and many slips backward, the advance toward it! Yet without the purpose there would not be the effort at achievement. A nation may fail to reach its ideal, but a nation without an ideal can achieve no progress.

4. If we descend to individuals, we see them making progress, in whatever they undertake, by this double movement. As a nurse beguiles an unwilling child into walking, by throwing ahead of it some bright thing which it is tempted to chase after, so we are all the time proposing to ourselves objects which stir up our energies to pursue them. We even walk or run only by thrusting our foot forward, and with that as a centre of motion drawing on our whole body. We do not go all at once, nor by a single movement; there is first the taking hold of something in advance, and then the coming up to it. The scholar is not in all respects a scholar when he first assumes that name. He thereby only declares his purpose. To overtake that purpose will require long years of study and investigation; indeed, he can never fully overtake it. It will move on in advance of him as he toils after it, even as Alps on Alps arise; and the utmost that he can ever know will only reveal to him the boundless realms which are yet unexplored. The same is true of the mechanic, the artist, the merchant, the professional man. The carpenter looks at work which he did when he first took the name, and sees in it many defects. He aimed to do better work,

and has overtaken his aim. The artist, looking on his first rude drawings and sketches, feels that he was not an artist then in the high sense in which he afterwards became one. He had a standard far ahead of him, from which came back an influence that has laid hold of him and drawn him forward. The physician, however carefully educated for his work, is yet a novice when he enters upon it. How much more he learns after the name is his than he learned before! His knowledge of the human frame, and of its diseases and their treatment, is all the time increasing as the circle of his experience widens. Oh, what a comment it is on the incompleteness of our present lives, and the need of another life to explain why God should create us at all, that just as soon as we begin to learn how to do our work the infirmities of age compel us to lay it aside! If the lawyer could retain all his first enthusiasm, and have it at his command when long years of study and practice have made him a master of the law, what an advocate he would be! If the fire of the young preacher would not go out after a little, but burn on into his mature life and old age, when he thoroughly knows the Scriptures, and is wise in all that pertains to his calling, what a minister he would be! But the eye grows dim. The loosened fibres of the flesh do not respond to the quick impulses of the soul. The preacher, balked by his infirmities, finds himself least in his vocation when he is greatest, as he once was greatest when he was least. There is no goal within the limits of our bodily powers which is adequate to human development. These fail us just as we have learned how to use them to the best advantage. Our ideal must lie outside of them all; and our purpose must go across them, laying hold of

that ideal, and still lifting us aloft when heart and flesh fail. The objects which we set before ourselves in this life, and which develop us while we toil toward them, illustrate a universal law of moral and religious progress; but that progress itself is on another plane, and has other and loftier ideals.

Thus far we have been chiefly tracing an analogy; let us now see what lessons it reads to us who have duties to perform toward Christ and His kingdom.

1. The first lesson is that our Christian sanctification goes forward by working toward a definite point, which point represents to us a perfect ideal yet to be attained. If you would know what that point is, it is the glorified person and the sinless character of Christ our Lord. In his letter to the Philippians St. Paul says: "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect; but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus." To apprehend a thing is to seize it, to lay hold of it. The apostle confesses that he has not yet laid hold of his ideal of a perfect Christian manhood. But from Christ, in whom he sees that ideal, an influence has come down and laid hold of him, and is steadily drawing him upward. His glorified Lord became this ideal to him, this standard of attainment for him to struggle toward, when he obeyed the heavenly vision. In the way to Damascus, quick as the flash of light which smote him to the ground, his purpose was formed. He could not then fully know what it meant, for he was in darkness and confusion of mind. But he had strength to venture all, even himself, for the glory which had been suddenly revealed to him. As he went on, as he prayed and meditated and labored, his view of that toward which he

was struggling became clearer, and he was glad to find in himself the evidence that he steadily drew nearer to it. Of himself and those who toiled with him he could at all times say, "Now is our salvation nearer than when we believed." It is this great purpose, not yet overtaken, which he seems to have in mind when he says that his conversation is in heaven. He goes forward by faith into a life of goodness which is yet to be made actual to him. The ideal of Paul is far in the future, and the real Paul is pressing forward to overtake the ideal. Every earnest Christian is like a runner at the Grecian games. The mark set before him is a complete Christian character. If his soul be not full of yearning for that, he will cease to run, or will run amiss. But if he already lays hold of it in faith, he will press toward it, forgetting the things behind and reaching forth unto those before. His high purpose, and his struggle to reach it, maintained within him by the spirit of God, will carry him from strength to strength. Those three thousand, converted in one day at the time of Pentecost, no doubt had very dim visions of what it is to be a perfect Christian. But they saw something in the future which drew all that was good in them toward it; and as they yielded to the attraction what they saw grew brighter, while it made their own souls better and better.

2. This law of progress which we have considered, also reads an important lesson to those who are hesitating to accept Christ. They have come near to the kingdom of God; but they refuse to enter into it, for they lack certain deep convictions, or strong impulses, or clear views, which they feel that they should have. Are there any such here present? Dear friends, you will never get any farther than you have now come

till you take hold of something beyond yourself. That for which you wait will not be yours till you have made Christ your Lord and Master. Plant yourself outside of your doubts and fears by a swift and hearty surrender to Him, and gradually you will escape from the surrounding gloom. That which you wait for must be the effect of your own action. Do not say any longer that you must see the effect, before you can make up your mind to supply the cause. Give that sudden and brave spring forward which is the answer to Christ's own blessed invitation, "Come unto me;" and from this act of surrender, as from some blessed source far beyond and above you, there shall come to you a power which will lift you away from your fears, and from all your mental confusion, into the light and the peace of God's own presence. You may not find your proper orbit all at once, but you will no longer be a wandering star. The Lord your Righteousness, that glorious centre as yet but dimly discerned, will draw you out of the darkness in which you were so far off. Christ will lead you to the rock, higher than yourself, on which your opening eye is fixed. He will draw you as the magnet draws the steel, binding you to Himself with indissoluble cords.

3. But perhaps you have in your heart owned Christ as your Lord, and are trying to rest in that, not joining yourself to the company of His disciples. Do not say, then, that membership in a church of Christ is nothing. It is a great thing. It plants your foot forward. It is another step added to those you have already taken, without which you must cease to make progress. It brings new obligations, new influences and motives, which you need to lift you farther into the light. Oh, how many have stopped in their

religious life just here! They shrank from confessing Christ openly, and were left without any goal of attainment in the future. There was no mark for them to press toward, and gradually they ceased to run or wandered away. Suppose that Abraham, when he heard what God was to do for him, had stayed in Chaldæa. He could not have become the man he afterwards was, if he had not separated himself to God's work. It was his mighty purpose, earnestly followed in the strength which God gave, that made him great. He never could have been the father of the faithful, and the friend of God, if he had not gone into Canaan, built his altars there, and there pitched his tent in the midst of his flocks. And you will remain where you are in your religious life, or the rather slide back from it, a prey to doubts, if you have no mark ahead of yourself, toward which to press. The open confession of Christ, and union with His people, furnishes such a mark. It is the next summit before you on your way to heaven, if you have come through the wicket-gate by choosing Christ to be your Lord and Master. What if Israel had stayed in Egypt after hearing that they were to possess Canaan? Then they would have simply continued to be bondmen, despite of the promise. But they openly professed their faith. The wrath of the king could not withhold them; and they braved the sea, and the wilderness, with their eye fixed on the prize. This openness, this venturing in God's strength, this pressing after the unattained, made them a powerful and victorious people. Perhaps you say that you are not fitted for church-membership. But that is just the argument of this sermon. The lawyer is not fitted to be a lawyer when he first becomes one; and the same

is true of other callings, in which experience alone can make one wholly fit for it. You need the membership as a mark or goal. To be sure, it is ahead of you; it may be far ahead. But it is the measure of your purpose. It tells what, with God's help, you are determined to become. You cannot apprehend the prize if you do not allow yourself to be apprehended for it. You admire the character of St. Paul, dear friend. You wonder at his heroic life. But he had this same question to meet, over which you may stumble. What if he, after becoming a disciple, had gone away into Arabia never to come back? to stay there, and be like those about him, never confessing Christ or proclaiming the new faith which was in him? Had he taken that course, a large part of our present New Testament would not have been written. But we know that he took another course. He essayed to join himself unto the disciples. And though they were afraid of him at first, and would not receive him, he persisted in urging his case till he became one of their number. You may stop where you now are, apart from the army which Christ leads; and neither you nor your friends may ever know what energies in you are thus left to lie dormant. But take the step, enter that army, press after its bright standard which is ever moving away upward before you, and you shall find, and the world about you shall confess, that the spiritual forces in you, which were once no greater than a grain of mustard-seed, have unfolded and grown till they are like a mighty tree in which the birds of the air have their habitation.

THE WITNESS OF UNBELIEF.

In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. — 2 COR. iv. 4.

THE late John Stuart Mill, famous the world over for his philosophy, did not recognize, anywhere in all his writings, the existence of a soul in man separate from the body. Yet it is said that while he lay dying he asked a daughter, who stood by his bedside, what message he should take from her to her mother, his beloved wife, who had died some years before him. Lord Herbert of Cherbury, also a distinguished leader of the English deists two hundred years ago, published a work, the object of which was to prove the impossibility of any special revelation from God to men. Yet he declares that before putting that work into the hands of the printer he sought divine guidance, and that a clear voice, speaking to him out of the sky, directed him to go forward with his enterprise. The example of these two men, thus witnessing to the truth which they sought to destroy, may serve to suggest the general subject which I propose now to consider; namely, the testimony which unbelievers themselves furnish in favor of the great truths of a divine revelation.

The sum and substance of the gospel, as contained in the Old and New Testaments, we hold to be this: that mankind have fallen away from their original

fellowship with the true God, and need to be restored to that lost communion through the mediation and atonement of Jesus Christ. To this tremendous statement, so emphatically made in the text, I hold that the infidel world is to-day a powerful though unwilling witness.

Unbelief is not a thing by itself, but simply one of the forms in which the general worldliness or ungodliness of men is manifested. All the moral attributes of God, such as His truth, His justice, His mercy, and His faithfulness, are but the various forthputtings of that infinite love which constitutes His essential character; and so all the evil developments of human life, such as ambition, the greed of gain, crime, vice, pride, and infidelity, are but varying manifestations of that sinful worldliness which is the universal curse. Our noblest instincts confirm all that the Scriptures teach respecting the high origin and powers of the human soul. When we read that "there is a spirit in man, and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding," the deepest voice of our nature says Amen to the glorious words. It is written on the tables of our hearts, as truly as in the first chapter of Genesis, that we were made in the image of God. The eighth Psalm reëchoes our inmost convictions in declaring that God crowned man with glory and honor, and set him over the work of His hands. When St. Paul tells us that God is the Father of the spirits of flesh, a sacred joy at the centre of our being starts up responsively to his words. It is a truth of natural religion, no less than of revealed religion, which St. Luke proclaims in his genealogy of Christ, where he says that as Seth was the son of Adam, so was Adam the son of God.

Now such being the original greatness of men, as they came immortal spirits from the hand of their Creator, it follows that their present state of worldliness and unbelief could be reached only by some great catastrophe. There has been a terrible falling away of the spiritual nature in mankind. That glorious spirit was, for wise reasons, joined to the flesh, and subjected to a probation in this present world. In this union of the immortal with the mortal, however, the immortal spirit was placed on the throne, and the mortal body was to be its servant, for all the high ends given it to accomplish here. That dominion and supremacy the soul has not maintained. It has abdicated its lofty throne. The tendencies of the lower nature have risen up around the higher nature, and laid hold of it, and drawn it down into a woful bondage. It lies prostrate and dying in that ignoble slavery, as we sometimes find the decayed ruins of a noble tree underneath the rank luxuriance of a poisonous vine, which grew up around its lordly stem, and laid hold of its branches one after another, drawing them gradually downward into the dust of death. This state, into which mankind have come by yielding to their lower nature, is pictured to us in the expulsion of Adam and Eve from Paradise. The dreadful spiritual change which came upon man was as if the earth, once arrayed in beauty and fruitfulness, should begin to be covered with briers and thorns. How a compassionate God felt, in view of this great downfall and thralldom of His children, is taught us by the incarnation, sufferings, and intercession of our Lord. We see the awful issue and rebound of this spiritual overthrow of our race in the lurid flames of that bottomless pit whose smoke ascendeth up forever. Now

it is not the intellectual nature in men, nor their æsthetic nature, nor their affections as related to the intercourse of this life, which the Scriptures have especially in view, when they speak in such awful terms as they do of the guilt and misery of men. The great calamity which they bewail is the separation of the spirits of all flesh from their divine Father, and the bondage of those spirits to the things of time and sense. True, the highest capacity in man cannot be injured and his other powers go unharmed. The rust which gathers on the top of a bed of marble sends its stain downward through all the underlying whiteness. The flame on the roof of a goodly building, which draws to itself the quenching streams of water, not only burns where it is, but causes all the beauty beneath it to be soiled by its own effects. So when man is maimed and soiled in his spirit by departing from God into the bondage of the flesh, all the lower powers of his nature suffer. He is not so good a scientist, speculatist, merchant, reformer, neighbor, parent, citizen, friend, as he would have been had he not thus fallen. Yet his various powers remain to him ; and he uses them, such as they are, in the various activities of the present life, though laboring without reference to God, and wholly deprived of that certainty of being led into the truth which the presence and inworking of God assure.

It is this want of divine communion, this departure from God and forgetfulness of Him, which the Bible has in view when it speaks of the sinfulness of men. They have all gone out of the way ; they are wandering sheep, lost pieces of silver, prodigal children. The absence of God from the heart, who alone can enlighten and keep it, leaves it deceitful above all

things, and desperately wicked. This is that enmity of the carnal heart against God of which we read. This was the body of death under which Saint Paul groaned and cried out for deliverance. Through this bondage to the flesh it is that the world lieth in wickedness. This makes men dead toward God; dead in trespasses and sins; without power to live that holy and divine life for which they were created, save as they are delivered from their bondage back into the glorious liberty of the sons of God.

Now this universal sinfulness, ungodliness, worldliness, or whatever we please to call it, is shown around us in almost endless forms. The infidelities of the day cannot escape our classification; they, too, are forms of the general worldliness; and they bear witness, as clearly as all other forms of wickedness, that the teachings of God's word and the deeper instincts of our hearts are true. I call them to the stand, and force them to give in their testimony, just as confidently as I call up the commonest sins of the street. Look on that murderer in yonder prison, whom the public conscience, if not the legal judge, has condemned to die. Why did he take the life of his fellow? and why has he no feeling of the enormity of his crime? Ah! it is a long, sad story of traveling down into the darkness of sensuality and crime. The high spiritual nature in him became weak, powerless, enslaved. No light of God's love shone through his soul. Selfishness, hatred, jealousy, revenge, the desperation of appetite and passion, drove him to his bloody work. Oh that he had been as in days past — as in the sweet and innocent years of childhood, when heaven lay all about him! Oh that he had clung to the hand of God, and cherished the high powers of

his soul, and not let himself be chained in the fetters of the flesh! Then had he escaped the temptation to evil, and not been devoted to death, but to life eternal. Murder is but the form of our common sinfulness, into which he, by yielding to certain evil tendencies, was at last betrayed. Or take the defaulter, suddenly overwhelmed by exposure, and dragging family and friends down with him into the gulf of public infamy. Why did he recklessly squander the large sums entrusted to him, regardless of the claims of those who suffer by his dishonesty? The explanation is at hand. His intellect, his aspirations, all the energies of his nature, were turned into the downward path. They became the instruments of a selfish will. The things unseen and eternal faded from his sight, and all the objects he most sought lay in the sphere of the seen and temporal. His conscience, love of justice, and sense of obligation grew weak, through the weakness of that higher nature in him which he had neglected. Though he gave heed to the outward forms of religion, his soul was all the time sinking into a deeper slumber. The eye of faith was dim. Eternity faded from his vision, and time was to him the all in all. God was not near him. He had not spiritual power enough to hold in check his strong earthly desires. If he had held fast to God, thus keeping his higher nature strong and active, he would have resisted the temptation. But he fell away from God; and through the feebleness of his spiritual life, which thus came upon him, he was led captive by his overgrown fleshly tendencies. His conduct is a proof of the truth of what the Scriptures say on the subject of human apostasy. He would not have behaved in a manner so unworthy of his immortal nature, had not that nature been first brought into bondage by his departure from God.

Thus might I go on, showing not only that all specific crimes, but that the corruption, extravagance, and recklessness of large bodies of men are neither more nor less than forms of that worldliness or ungodliness which constitutes the general life of our race. What the specific forms of this worldly life are — in what crimes, vices, indulgences, unbeliefs, or oppositions it will show itself — depends, of course, on the peculiarities of individuals. One will show his lack of spiritual life, and his bondage to this world, in one way, and another in another way; each according to the original bent of his mind, his culture, his surroundings, his present pursuits. That deadness of soul which makes this one a murderer, and that one a defaulter, makes another one a doubter and a scorner of the sublime teachings of religion. Those teachings pertain to a sphere out of which he has fallen. He has no eye for the glories of heaven, no ear for its everlasting song. Being wholly shut up and absorbed in the realms of sense, what wonder is it that he has become a skeptic and atheist? that he refuses to believe in things to which his soul is dead?

Now I am well aware that the unbelieving scholars and scientists of our day will dislike my principle of classification. They will spurn me for putting their infidelities into the same category with more outbreaking forms of human wickedness. Yet this is precisely where I put them and all their theories. Worldliness is their sin. They have ceased to walk with God. The spiritual side of their nature is blind, insensate, dead. God and heaven have, by their own confession, become to them the unknown and the “unknowable.” Who shall compute the magnitude of their loss? How contemptible their paltry discoveries, in the sphere of

the finite, compared with the infinite realm of which they have lost their clear knowledge! It saddens me, and I heave a sigh of sincere pity for the poor outcast from his divine Father's arms, when I hear Mr. Herbert Spencer say that God is the unknowable. Oh, what an exile is that! what a banishment from the true home of the Spirit, from that great inheritance in which alone the soul of man can grow, and ripen, and be full of peace and joy! He knows nothing of all that, and denies that it ever can be known. Our exulting faith in things divine and eternal is to him a mystery. He thinks us deluded, insane. Ah, my friends! just so the blind man wonders when he hears us speak of the glories of autumnal forests, of the exquisite beauties of the lily and violet, of the firmament blossoming every night with starry worlds. He, and Mr. Huxley, and Mr. Darwin, and Mr. Mill, and Alexander Bain, busy themselves with trying to shut all knowledge up to the phenomena of matter. Man is to them but a developed brute. Mind is the effect of bodily organization. Thought is a function of the gray matter in the brain. All that you find in Shakespeare, Milton, Isaiah, or Paul exists, in a crude and rudimentary state, in the reptile which we bruise with our heel. Now what lights of faith must have gone out in the souls of such men, if they do indeed, with all sincerity, believe what they say! How they narrow down and belittle this mighty universe! They have closed up in themselves those windows by which the human soul may look forth on the bright plains of immensity; and hence they say that there are no such plains. But the fact that they see not the unconditioned world proves to us quite another truth. If we had not our own experience, which we dare not doubt,

yet there is the testimony of the most imperial minds of our race, in every generation, to the reality of a spiritual world. We can doubt the teachings of our bodily senses sooner than the sacred convictions of our souls. It would be less hard for us to believe that there is no earth, no sea, no sky or stars, than to believe that there is no God. He is the self-evident and omnipresent One; and therefore we say that any man who doubts the existence of God confesses to his own spiritual blindness. He has fallen away into the power of this world. The higher faculties of his nature have grown torpid and dead during his long exile from God. Having ears he hears not, and the eyes of his soul are closed up against those great truths which wander to us out of the eternal realm. He is like the bewildered Prince of Denmark, whom Shakespeare makes say, "This most excellent canopy, the air, this brave o'erhanging firmament, this majestic roof fretted with golden fire, appears no other thing to me than a foul and pestilent congregation of vapors." "Appears no other thing to me" is the wise language of the great dramatist; for he well knew that the mind of Hamlet was in no condition to pass judgment on this matter, and that his gloomy and inadequate views of the universe but proved the fearfully distracted state of his own mind. It is not necessary, therefore, that we should charge hypocrisy or insincerity on the unbelievers of our time, as they so freely do upon us. We approach them with the Scriptural doctrine of the self-exile of man from God. Their unbelief witnesses, with a marvelous emphasis, that that doctrine is true. We look upon some of the foremost of these doubters with a sorrowful respect; with respect in view of their

great natural abilities and consummate earthly culture, with sorrow when we see how completely they have wandered out of the higher realms of the soul. They may be authorities on many questions of mere natural science, in all matters pertaining to this worldly life. But when it comes to spiritual concerns, they are no more fitted to teach than the humblest of the rude and unlettered mass. Nay, there are thousands, unknown to scientific or literary fame, whose word upon these high themes is to be taken long before theirs; for what is hid from the wise and prudent is revealed to babes. The sublime doctrine of the new birth found no entrance into the cultivated soul of Nicodemus, all whose culture was of an earthly kind; but it was welcomed by the woman of Samaria, for she was yet alive in that part of her nature which looks toward God, and eternity, and spiritual things. "The natural man perceiveth not the things which be of God," says St. Paul. No matter how learned or wise any may be, this disability rests upon them till they have the faculty of divine knowledge restored to them in Christ. He alone is the truth; and all who follow in His steps, however lowly, partake of the spirit of truth in Him; while any who turn aside from the life which He has brought down to us walk in darkness. They have in them no knowledge or faculty on which to build an opinion concerning the realm of spiritual truth. All their learning and science carries them farther into that worldliness where God is never found. We grieve over the torpid and crippled state of their religious nature, while admiring the wonderful strides which they make in all other knowledge; and the pressing question with us is, How shall they, or at least their deluded followers, so many of them as we may reach,

be rescued from that bondage of the flesh to which their unbelief witnesses, and be turned about, and made to see those eternal verities which are an unknown land to them in their present state of mind?

To this question, brethren, let us now attend. We see that the great need of unbelievers, as of all other worldly men, is to be raised up out of the power of the flesh into communion with God. Of course this restoration is a supernatural work. There are no forces in nature which can raise man above nature; that which elevates us to God must come from God. Now we hold to all the divine and supernatural helps for which this mighty exigency calls: they have been let down to us in the cross of Jesus Christ, by whom also we receive atonement, and who brings life and immortality to light. This great redemption in Him is all our hope and all our joy. But while we rejoice in all the mysteries which this redemption involves, being led by the Spirit of God, how are worldly men and unbelievers to be convinced of their truth, that they, too, may become partakers of our joy?

1. Let me say a word, first, of those arguments which we address to the reason and understanding of men. Far be it from me to underrate any of these. We have, on one side, a scientific spirit, the highest intelligence, the utmost loyalty to truth. Infidelity has been met on its own ground of debate; and the many works written in reply to its pretensions are among the noblest literary monuments. Over against all assaults on our religious faith, there stands a defense of the faith inscribed with the greatest names in philosophy, science, and letters. The doctrine of evolution, as put forth by Herbert Spencer, has been answered again and again in the arena of philosophical

debate. When Mr. Mill tells us that there are no first truths, and that we can never know anything but sensuous phenomena, we point him to the intuitional philosophy of Reid, Hamilton, Coleridge, and Hickock, which he must accept, or the basis of his own system is gone. The doctrine of Darwin and Huxley, that what we call intellectual and spiritual life is only the result of a highly developed bodily organization, has been overthrown many times by the greatest masters of philosophical reasoning. "Properly speaking," says Julius Müller, "there is no fixed transition from nature to spirit: spirit is not only distinct from the stages below it, but is essentially different from nature as a whole; the difference is one not of degree merely, but of kind, for spirit is infinitely above nature, — an entirely new beginning, which can be explained neither by the stage of natural development next below it, nor by all the stages of natural development together." In answer to the atheism of Comte and his extreme followers, if their own inconsistencies be not a sufficient witness to the truth, we may bring the conclusion of the great Kantian school of thinkers, that the being of God is a truth which it is impossible to doubt. What the adherents of the positive philosophy say, of the extension of natural processes into the whole realm of human conduct, falls before the grand words of William von Humboldt: "There is a voice in the human soul which tells man that he is free and independent. In the natural world all things are enchained one with another, but man's consciousness of freedom makes him enter this world as the denizen of another; for what is only earthly can never be free, and what is spiritual can never be subject to necessity." Thus might I go on and show,

did time permit, how every position which unbelief has taken in the field of rational debate has been effectually turned.

But these triumphant replies to the doubter are not what we need in dealing with him. So far as the actual persuading of the skeptic goes, their results are small. They are almost worthless practically, however noble as masterpieces of reasoning and thought, for two reasons : (1) Those who believe them are convinced without them ; and (2) confirmed unbelievers lack the power which alone can appreciate them. (1) Religious skepticism would be proof of insanity to such a man as Jonathan Edwards, who could say of himself, "There seemed to me to be, as it were, a calm, sweet cast, or appearance of divine glory, in almost everything. God's excellency, His wisdom, His purity and love, seemed to appear in everything ; in the sun, and moon, and stars ; in the clouds and blue sky ; in the grass, flowers, and trees ; in the water and all nature." No doubt such men as Edward Payson would receive every word of our splendid Christian apologetics. Yet of what use could they all be to him ? who saw, with the open eye of his soul, what is within the veil ; and could say, "I have been for some weeks a happy inhabitant of the land of Beulah. The celestial city is full in my view. Its glories have been upon me, its breezes fan me, its odors are wafted to me, its sounds strike upon my ears, and its spirit is breathed into my heart." There is to-day a great company of new-born souls in our Christian churches, to which the grandest words of the defenders of the faith are meagre and tame. The most glowing descriptions of the being and attributes of God, and of the unseen world disclosed to us by

inspiration, do not come up to what they daily experience. They know whom they have believed. Their faith rests on things which they have seen and handled for themselves. Unbelief is what they cannot understand. To attempt to answer it is, in their view, to reason with madmen. The life of God has entered into them, enabling them to lay hold of what the natural man perceiveth not; and hence all unbelief is to them irrational, and our meeting it in the arena of philosophical debate a piece of impertinence. (2) But it is no less true that our reasonings against unbelief are not needed by those who are spiritually alive, than that they fail to convince those who are spiritually dead. They do not live that transcendent life in which Edwards and Payson rejoiced. Lacking, as they do, the spiritual wakefulness by which the truths of Christianity are made evident to the soul, our reasoning is lost upon them. They treat us as the thinkers of Athens treated Paul in Mars Hill, — mocking the doctrines which to him were entirely reasonable, because they had none of his deep consciousness of the supernatural world. He was to them as an heathen man and a publican, though he spoke the highest reason. He spoke to them out of a realm the knowledge of which had not been retained in their thoughts. He addressed a part of their nature which generations of worldliness had made torpid and dead. Christ met this same obstacle in his efforts to reason with men about spiritual things. He gave over trying to persuade unbelievers; saying, with just though terrible severity, “Cast not your pearls before swine, nor give that which is holy to dogs.” He refused to reason with Nicodemus about the new birth. That ruler of the Jews, though learned and polished in his way, was

yet of an earthly mind. There was nothing in him which responded to the voice of Christ. He could only say, "How can these things be?" when Christ spoke of the operations of the Spirit. Christ ceased trying to persuade him, finding in him no spiritual life to which he could speak, and saying, "How shall you believe, if I tell you heavenly things?" The light withdrew its shining, because the darkness in which it shone comprehended it not.

2. Another argument, which we prize above all our reasonings when we deal with unbelief, is the Christian life. Professor Christlieb's remark, that the Christian is the world's Bible, but repeats the teaching of Scripture which says, "Ye are living epistles; ye are the light of the world." We sometimes compare Christ's followers, whom he has left here below while He pleads within the veil, to the moon, which shines in the absence of the sun. But the figure is inadequate; for the moon only reflects the light of the sun, while Christ does in very deed dwell in the hearts of His people. He is formed within them. It is not they that live, but He liveth in them; His life and His dying reign in their mortal body. There is this supernatural and divine element in every true Christian. He is a revelation of God to all who behold him. The great change which came over Henry Martyn, when he gave up his brilliant prospects at the university and devoted himself to the work of missions, cannot be accounted for on natural principles. The conversions of St. Paul, of Colonel James Gardiner, of Martin Luther, of John Bunyan, and their subsequent experiences of the new life in Christ, are an insoluble mystery to such as deny the supernatural. A world wholly above nature, divine and eternal, came

down into those men, and revealed itself to the astonished gaze of all who met them. This manifestation of a spiritual realm, in which God and Christ dwell, goes on through the ages, in the lives of the great company of the redeemed. Yet how small the power of this sublime argument on unbelievers! It is only a testimony against them — oh, how often! — where we look to see it bring them to repentance. To me, brethren, it is one of the saddest facts connected with the life of Christ, that so few of those who saw Him, and heard Him speak, and beheld His mighty works, believed on His name. We read that He Himself marveled at this unbelief; and He refused to teach, and work miracles, before the men who were so dead to spiritual things. What a comment, on the lapsed condition of the souls to which He came, that all the disciples in and about Jerusalem, whom His wondrous life and ministry had made, could be gathered into one small room about the time of Pentecost, being in number only an hundred and twenty! Think it not strange that the converting power of our life is small, if that of the Son of God Himself bore no greater fruit. All this glorious testimony is made weak through the spiritual blindness of those to whom it is addressed. The darkness does not comprehend the light. The natural man perceiveth not the things which be of God. Their worldliness, like the garish day, makes invisible to men the constellations of divine truth which circle and roll in beauteous order all through the eternity lying so deep and vast about them. Such is the spiritual condition of all unbelievers. In vain do we reason or argue with them; in vain do they see the power of Christianity displayed in the lives of believers; in vain do we tell them that

the religion of Christ is adapted to meet the deepest wants of their natures. Their spiritual life is too feeble to appreciate any of these persuasions to faith. We speak wisdom among the perfect ; but to the Jew it is a stumbling-block, and to the Greek foolishness. What a witness against men is their own unbelief ! How it confirms the truth of their deadness of soul, out of which their unbelief grows, that the sublime argument which the history of the church offers them leaves them unconvinced ! The eye of the spirit in them is closed up. They doubt the existence of the great world of religious truth, of which this temporal world is only a poor shadow, because they have not the power to see it. Oh that some man of God might pray for them as Elisha prayed for his servant in Dothan ! then should their eyes be opened to see, with the prophet's own blessed vision, the horses and chariots of God in the mountains round about them.

3. How, then, are unbelievers to be convinced ? What shall scatter the mists of skepticism ? What shall drive infidelity and atheism out of the world ? The occasion of the evil suggests the nature of the remedy. "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit," saith the Lord. The grand need of men, in order that they may escape from their bondage to doubt, is spiritual quickening. They doubt because they are dead in trespasses and sins ; and they will believe just so far as they are raised up out of this grave, and made alive unto God, by the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost. This is the first resurrection, which they must experience in order that they may believe in the unseen things which to us are the truest of all truths. It is clear, therefore, why Christ and the apostles make so

much of the second birth. Nothing is plainer than that they did not expect men to believe, in any saving sense, till their souls had been begotten again from the dead. This faith of theirs is uttered in the strongest possible way by Paul, where he says, "No man can call Christ Lord save by the Spirit of God." The dear truth that we are God's children is wholly unknown to us till this same Spirit enters into our hearts and enables us to cry, "Abba, Father." Not a Christian grace or virtue is there in the noblest character, but we must view it as one of the fruits of the Spirit. No power of argument, no power of example, but His renewing work in the souls of men, convinces them of sin, of righteousness, of judgment to come. Of all the proper names which we find in the Bible, it seems to me, brethren, that none is more befitting than the one which Christ gave to the Spirit. He called Him the Comforter. "The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, the Father will send in my name." God has always appeared as the Comforter of His people, adapting His aid to their present exigency. And the exigency now upon us is one in which nothing but the Spirit, changing men's hearts, can give us any comfort or hope. We are bidden to preach the gospel to every creature, until the world shall be full of the glory of God. But we find in men no power to receive our message. The carrying out of the promise, which began to be fulfilled on the day of Pentecost, alone is able to save us from despair. We go on proclaiming what the natural man perceiveth not, knowing that the Spirit is poured out on all flesh. Great is the comfort of His presence; He is almighty; nothing can withstand His power. Were it not for Him, we should have no hope of any soul.

But with His aid, brooding over the dead heart, and making a place in it for the truth, we are girded all the time with a joyous courage. We preach to the scorner, to the sullen doubter, to the worldling, to the slave of vice, to the artful opposer, yea, and to those almost persuaded, with one and the same confidence: for it is not we that speak, but God speaketh by us; with Him all things are possible; the words which we utter are the Spirit's weapons, and in His hand are mighty to the pulling down of strongholds. Miracles, as technically defined, may be no longer needed in the church; but in a larger sense they are needed, and are all the time taking place, and will continue to be indispensable till the world is converted to God. The sons of God did not shout for joy with more wonder in the first morning of creation than the angels still rejoice when He that was dead is alive again. Regeneration is the work of God. Repentance and faith are supernatural acts. We are God's workmanship, recreated in Christ Jesus unto good works. It is as this blessed renewal goes on in society, in men's hearts, in the literature and business and legislation of the world, that the new heaven and earth, in which righteousness is to dwell, shall be revealed. Our most becoming attitude is that of prayer for the coming of the Spirit, my brethren, while we strive to extend around us, through all human pursuits and interests, the blessed reign of Christ. We prophesy in a valley of dry bones, even as Ezekiel did; and, like him, we shall be mighty only as we lift up the voice, "Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live."

“ Spirit of power and might, behold
A world by sin destroyed !
Creator Spirit, as of old
Move on the formless void.

“ Give Thou the word : that healing sound
Shall quell the deadly strife,
And earth again, like Eden crowned,
Produce the tree of life.”

WORSHIP AS A MEANS OF SPIRITUAL CULTURE.¹

God is a Spirit : and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth. — JOHN iv. 24.

MY DEAR PEOPLE, MEMBERS OF THE OLD SOUTH CHURCH AND SOCIETY : — You have erected here “ a house for the assembling yourselves [themselves] together publicly to worship God ; ” and it is with great joy that we are met this evening to set it apart for that solemn use, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

The important thing in the worship of God is that it furnishes to us our principal means of spiritual culture ; and in that light I now invite you to consider it.

Our blessed Lord teaches us, in the text, that all true worship of God is essentially a spiritual exercise. They that worship God “ must worship Him in spirit.” The service cannot be rendered by any of our lower faculties, but only by our highest faculties ; by that in us which is spiritual, which is immortal, which can overleap the bounds of time and lay hold of eternal things, which came directly from God, and partakes of His own divine nature.

That we all have in us this high spiritual nature, constituting us the children of God, I need not prove to you who are gathered here to-night. You believe in it as thoroughly as did the men to whom St. Paul

¹ Preached at the dedication of the Old South, December 15, 1875.

preached in Mars Hill, whose own poets had taught them that they were "God's offspring." A noble joy thrills you, responsive to the great words of Scripture which declare that God is "the Father of spirits;" which represent God as saying, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness;" which teach that the divine life breathed into us makes us living souls; which say that God has crowned us with glory and honor, and set us over the works of His hands.

This spiritual nature in us may be in bondage. It may lie dead under an incrustation of worldliness and sin. It may need to be quickened by the power of the Holy Ghost, and delivered through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, in order that we may be fully conscious of it, so as to look up into God's face and cry, "Abba, Father." But that we have it, that it is our essential attribute and the peculiar glory of our race, nothing can ever make us doubt. God is a Spirit, and man is a spirit; and inasmuch as the worship of God is an employment which engages our spirits in their most lively and vigorous exercise, such worship is to us the most important of all the duties we are called upon to perform.

You provide means for the education and training of the lower departments of man's nature, — the discipline being carefully adapted in each case to the end which is sought. (1) Great attention is paid, for instance, to the wants of man's physical nature. In proof of this I need but point you to the gymnasium, the riding-school, the skating-rink, the play-grounds and parks, so carefully guarded in our large cities. Parents in their homes, and teachers in the schools, are careful to provide whatever may tend to the bodily growth, health, and vigor of the young. Ventilation,

drainage, what we shall eat and drink, and what we shall wear, are subjects of earnest study and advice. To prevent disease, rather than to cure it, is the aim of the high-minded physician. Boards of health are organized to consider what shall be done with infectious diseases and malarious districts; and vital statistics are gathered in the hope of leading to measures which shall promote the physical vigor of races and nations. We recognize the claims of this care for men's bodies even in the house of God, our churches being supplied with pure air, warmth, light, and comfortable sittings, as they were not at an earlier day. Experience has taught us that soundness of body may be an aid to spiritual health; and we provide that physical comfort which the civilization of our time demands, in order that the soul, unhindered by a feeble or weary body, may be free to listen, and praise, and adore. (2) Consider, again, what pains we take to provide for the intellectual culture of both old and young. The largest item in our tax-bills, usually, is that which goes to support the public schools. Not only are universities founded and maintained at great cost, in which students are fitted for the learned professions, and where special studies into every department of knowledge are pushed to the utmost, but a large class of lecturers and writers are kept busy popularizing this knowledge, that it may come into our homes and be scattered broadcast, to be the food of our intellects, and to save them from degeneracy amid the wear and tear of our daily life. And this carefulness for mental health and growth, too, is duly honored in our New England churches. The preacher is expected to offer to his people from week to week, not mere platitudes, or exhortations which are stale and

superficial, but the fruits of his prolonged and earnest thought, — patient studies of the profoundest subjects, which shall enlighten the understanding, and stimulate and feed the love of truth.

Once more, (3) recall the pains which we take for the æsthetic culture of ourselves and our children. Our homes and our public buildings are planned with an eye to their beauty as well as their utility. Not only do we try to make them convenient and comfortable within, but tasteful both within and without. We value a superb picture or piece of statuary, and any exquisite furniture, for their refining influence upon our artistic nature. We multiply as we are able, in our dwellings and in public museums, these silent teachers, which shape our taste to their noble and faultless forms. The bald life of an earlier day does not satisfy us. We are continually breaking over the restraints of our forefathers, feeling that their plain ways were due quite as much to want of æsthetic spirit as to their high morals. Not only architecture, painting, and sculpture, but music in all its forms, is prized as a means to this æsthetic culture. We also fill our bookcases with the finest works of imagination, in both poetry and prose. And our social and domestic life, our tables, our dress, our equipages, and neighborly intercourse, are shaped with a view to making them a part of this artistic school. Nature joins with human skill in providing for this æsthetic discipline. She gives us her midday glories, her rising and setting suns, her soft shadows on the distant slopes and plains, her gleaming cascades, her misty cataracts, her mossy and dripping glens, her echoing caverns, her noisy brooks, her overarching and whispering trees, her grotesque forms, her bald cliffs, her sky-kissing moun-

tain ranges, with their awful gorges between. The roof of her temple is fretted with golden fire, and its floor inlaid with malachite and pearl. We hear her feathered choirs in the leafy groves; the solemn voice of her immensity comes up to us from the sea. This vast provision for our æsthetic culture, which we find in nature and society, is not unduly reflected in our best houses of worship. Their architecture and decorations, their music, their ceremonial and forms of speech, will prove a clog to the human spirit, in its efforts to commune with God, if conspicuous for their ugliness, or if they offend that æsthetic standard which our common civilization has set up.

Such are the means furnished for the education of the lower departments of our nature. I recognize them all as proper and necessary; but it is not for them that I plead to-night. There is, within the body, something which is more than the body. Man's noblest capacity is not intellectual or æsthetic. When we have mounted to this height, we but stand on the threshold of that in him which is his true glory: the holy of holies is yet far above. Man is a spirit; he was made in the image of God, and in that divine nature is the true sanctuary of our being. It is for the culture of this that I plead; that this may be quickened and unfolded within us, we are commanded to worship God.

When the patriarch was returning home from the East, being about to meet his brother Esau, whose anger he dreaded, his greatest care was for the safety of that which he held dearest. He sent forward, as first to meet the danger, his flocks, led by his servants, having separated them into several droves. Then, far behind these, he placed the handmaids and their chil-

dren; and after them, yet farther in the rear, went Leah and her children; and last of all, in the place of least peril, came his beloved Rachel with his son Joseph. And he said, "If Esau come to one company and smite it, then the other company which is left shall escape." Now, dear friends, let us not reverse this wise order in caring for our various capacities and wants. If anything in us must be risked, let it be the body, and the intellect, and the æsthetic nature, rather than the soul. Let us first provide for the safety, and for the growth and culture, of that in us which makes us God's children. By this arrangement I believe that we shall not only save what is most precious in us, but all else which we hold dear; even as Jacob, who cared first for the child of promise, was permitted to see his whole family and all his substance delivered. St. Paul prays for his brethren that their soul, body, and spirit may be preserved unto the coming of the Lord; and experience teaches us that it is by caring for the higher interest that we secure the lower. God has so ordered it that blessedness and joy flow downward. If our manhood or womanhood be alive and flourishing at its top, all its lower branches will partake of the vigor and health.

But I greatly fear that many of us have fallen into sad neglect as regards this culture of the soul. What say the religious habits of a large class of citizens? Can they be said to have any religious habits? With all their wealth, and intelligence, and social refinement, are they not totally regardless of their spiritual culture? We hear and read a great deal about preaching the gospel to the poor. But are not the really poor, in our day, those who say that they are rich, and in need of nothing? Too many of these, alas! are "the

neglected classes; and they are suffering from the worst form of neglect, which is self-neglect. We thank God for all the bright exceptions; but I leave it for you to say, dear friends, whether or not those of our citizens most blessed with temporal prosperity are most constant and earnest in their devotion to spiritual things. Do not the great religious awakenings pass by these for the most part, and bless the common people? Do not the migratory habits of many, now in one place of sojourn and now in another, but so little of their time at home, tempt them to be irregular in their worship and communion? If any of us are conscious that we have thought too little of our spiritual culture in our devotion to other interests, let us here resolve that we will correct that fault. Why should our humanity be dead at the top? We are alive to every temporal interest, and why should we not be alive toward God? Why should that which is noblest in us be dwarfed, or fall into decay and death for want of exercise? Why should we cast our greatness from us? why take the crown of glory from our heads and tread it into the mire?

Now I do not mean to say that public worship is our only means of spiritual culture; but it is the central point, and the vitalizing source, of whatever other means we may employ. Men cease to care about the discipline of their spiritual powers, and grow gradually into the neglect of it in every form, when they have no more desire to assemble publicly for the worship of God. I am glad the good lady who gave this church her parcel of land put these golden words into her form of bequest. They point to the grandest object for which man can live; they express the noblest employment in which he can engage.

And just here we see the foundation on which the Christian pulpit, with its two sacraments, forever rests. It is the centre of this whole system of spiritual discipline; and I have no fears for its permanence and power, whatever its abuses may be, so long as men do not forget their highest and most sacred want. If it were possible to destroy the influence of the pulpit, it should have been a by-word and hissing long ago. Its sacred function has been most shamefully forgotten. It has been degraded to the level of the platform and the stage. Notoriety and fame have been sought by its occupants rather than the salvation of souls. It has been judged by its success in selling or renting the pews. Nothing is too vapid, too crude, or too wild to be tolerated in it, if so be that itching ears are pleased. Yet the spiritual thirst in us makes us cling to it, — as trees cling to the storm-swept rock, embracing its bald sides with their living roots, while they seek the nourishment of the good soil on which it rests. If we, whom God has set to preach the gospel, are true to this divine thirst in men, we have nothing to fear. The time can never come when our occupation shall be gone. It will be appreciated more and more, as men more deeply feel their spiritual wants. Our grand business is not with their secular interests, but with that in them which makes them heirs of eternity and the children of God. Let us take a lesson from other classes of workers, and be as devoted to our high calling as they are to their earthly vocations. Let us speak to that in men which can never die. Let us bring them the water of life and the bread of heaven. Let us do what we can to keep them from going maimed and dwarfed before the Great White Throne; what we can to present them, in that august

Presence, developed to the utmost in their spiritual nature, without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing.

Now the one object to which men's minds should be turned, in order to this spiritual culture, is God Himself. He is a Spirit, as our text teaches; and therefore He cannot be approached, or His attributes be contemplated, save in that exercise of our spiritual faculties which shall lift them up, and unfold and beautify them. Our spirits are placed over the works of His hands; and if they turn back on those works to find nutriment, they necessarily grow downward; they become like a vine dropping away from the noble trellis built above it, and soiling itself by groveling in the dust beneath. It is so important to us that we should see God, and grow upward around Him, that He has made His being an omnipresent and self-evident truth to our minds. He is not far from every one of us; and we cannot go from His presence, or escape from His Spirit. He reveals Himself to babes. We believe in Him before we believe in anything else; and nothing else more shocks the unperverted mind than the attempt to prove that there is a God. As well attempt to prove to it the existence of the air which it breathes, or of the sunlight in which it is glad. The heaven in which God dwells lies all about us; and we cannot help believing in Him, save as our spiritual eye is weakened and dimmed. Only too quickly, alas! do "the shades of our prison-house" gather about "the growing boy." And yet our belief in God, which is part of the original and most precious ornament of the soul, cannot be utterly effaced by "listlessness" or "mad endeavor," or by "all that is at enmity with joy." The divine dream is in us even while we slumber; and it is by the quickening

and right culture of our benumbed spirits that our God will return to us in all the glory of open vision. His own life, breathed into us by the Holy Ghost, awakes us to His presence; and in the yearning of that new life we go out after Him till we are filled with His fullness. What a life was that which holy men of old lived in God, out of which they wrote books, rude and savage though they were, which are the wonder of the world! This universe was to them God's vesture, His presence the inward light by which they read its tracery of symbols and letters everywhere. God created the heavens and the earth. God made man. God appointed the sun to rule by day, and the moon by night. God made the stars. God gathered the waters together. God said, "Let there be light." God made the firmament. God said, "Let the dry land appear." This great name is the pillar of fire which goes before us all our way through the sacred record. The patriarchs, pitching their tents beneath the oaks, and leading their flocks by the water-brooks; Israel in Egypt, and in the desert, in the midst of wonders and signs; judges and kings, prophets and psalmists, and in later times holy evangelists and apostles, — were made to feel that the one grand fact of the universe is God. The heavens declared to them the glory of God. The fact that the earth is full of God's wisdom was what gave it value in their eyes. To them the light was not a thing by itself, but the garment with which God covered Himself; and the transfigured clouds charmed them, not by reason of their own splendors, but because they were God's pavilion. The waters were the place where God laid the beams of His chambers, and the winds would be nothing if God did not walk on their

wings. The trees of Lebanon were God's trees; and the springs, and the rocks, and the grass, and the birds, the night and the day, the sea and sky, and hills and valleys, were the works of God's wisdom and power. Everything that had breath was called upon to praise God. The vapor and hail and snow were a part of the divine anthem. To the hills it was said, Rejoice on every side; and to the floods, Clap your hands. The Bible is God's book, not only because He inspired men to write it, but also because He is its one vast theme. His presence all through it is what makes it the Book of books; and we need nothing else so much as to find Him in it, and to cleave fast unto Him with a solemn joy, as those old writers did. This divine society, and steady gazing on the face of God, made them wondrously great in all their spiritual faculties, however dwarfed in other things. And why should not a like divine contact do for us, in our measure, what it did for them? It will do that same blessed work for us; it will unfold and transfigure us in spirit, as it did them. God has given the appropriate means for our education in every other respect, but for the education of our spirits He offers us Himself. Because we are His children, because we are above His other works, so that they can never do anything for the spirit but draw it downward, He unveils His gracious face. His benign presence surrounds us. "Look unto Me, all the ends of the earth," is His loving appeal. The divine possibilities in us throb with life the moment we touch Him; and by pressing boldly to His seat, and gazing steadfastly upon Him, we are changed into the same image from glory to glory.

And it is by worshiping God that this great boon — the education of the soul — is to be ours. I do

not mean to decry all inquiries about God, or all studies into His government and councils. Yet God does not become to us that which we most need while we approach Him in a merely speculative, critical, or inquisitive mood. It is in the attitude of worship that we must meet Him. Our spirits must have a longing unto Him. They must be open to the bread which He gives, and receptive of it. They must feel within themselves an emptiness which the tides of His mighty love alone fill. The soul which truly worships is not merely passive. Nothing could be more intensely active. Yet it is receptive; the peculiarity of its state is, that it is open to receive the floods of life which flow down into it out of the fatherly heart of God. Nor is this receptive attitude peculiar to worship. There must be somewhat of it, or there can be no gain to the mind in any respect. Lord Bacon teaches us that we cannot know Nature till we come to her to be taught. Humility is the threshold of every temple of knowledge which we seek to enter. We must not affect to lead, but must be willing to be led, if we would make the least progress. Truth flies away from the inhospitable mind; but she loves to visit and fill the open soul. If this be so in all the lower sciences, how much more when we come to the knowledge of God! Who can be otherwise than lowly, reverent, and emptied of self, when he meets the infinite God face to face? In his hunger and thirst of spirit, how sweet to him to open the door, that God may come in and sup with him, and he with God! And if adoration, reverence, worship, be the feeling which God's presence is fitted to stir in each soul, how much deeper the emotion when we are assembled in large numbers! We are quickened, soft-

ened, laid open in spirit to the incoming of God, by the exercises of public worship. Then it is that God comes down upon us as rain upon the mown grass, as showers that water the earth. Worn and jaded at the end of the week, our spirits are like a stretch of sea-shore at low tide, — the river channels empty, the harbor bare, the boats and ships lying upon their sides on the sand banks or in the mire. But when we are met together in the house of God, all our souls turned unto Him as the eyes of a maiden to her mistress, the scene begins to be changed. The incoming waves of divine love meet our spiritual yearnings. We are no longer empty, but filled with the fullness of God. Our sense of weariness departs. The cloud of worldly cares recedes. That which is greatest in us, which is divine and cannot die, begins to be refreshed. We forget our sins, our infirmities, our errors of judgment and conduct, while we bathe ourselves in the inflowing life of God. The capacities of our spirit, its larger channels, and each smallest and most inmost recess, receive more of that life than they can hold. The blessed refreshment rises over the banks. The whole plain of our humanity is flooded; and everything upon us, or within or around, turns out its beauty, and rests and rejoices in a brightness which is fairer than the sunlight, in a dawn which is clearer and sweeter than any summer morning. Whatever our patient studies, and our investigations of divine truth, may do for us, when we begin to worship God our souls are like the earth to which the sun is coming back after the long winter. The winding-sheet of spiritual death disappears; the icy fetters of worldliness are melted off; our deeper instincts feel the genial warmth; each loftiest faculty in us covers itself with verdure, and every tenderest possibility of the

soul springs forth anew. Our whole higher nature grows and blooms, and our peace and joy are full in that Fatherly Presence in which we live and move.

Such is the sacred end — the high spiritual culture attainable only through the devout worship of God — to which we dedicate this pulpit and its two sacraments, one on either hand; to which we dedicate its pews and aisles, its storied windows, its carved and frescoed walls, its many-voiced organ, its timbers and roof which bend so lovingly over us from above, — praying that all who worship here may grow to be, like its own massive and lofty tower, larger in their manhood, and more beautified and adorned in those parts which are nearest to the sky.

That this great blessing of spiritual culture might come to you and your children, and to as many as choose to cast in their lot with you, you have undergone the sore trial of a removal from your old to this new house of worship. How slowly, how unwillingly, and how sadly you yielded to that trial, is known to yourselves and to God. Some of you bear names which stand on the first records of our venerable church. You had associations with the former place, tender memories of it, and a loving attachment to it, which those who have criticised your action before the public cannot understand. If they had known how faintly, and but partially, their love for the ancient sanctuary reflected yours, I believe they would have tried to strengthen rather than weaken your hands, seeing that your love made you slow to act, and that you acted only as you were urged forward by the all-compelling hand of God.

There you were surrounded by a cloud of secular and patriotic memories, which obscured the spiritual history of our church; but here that spiritual history

may come out into the light, and be made an incentive to soul-culture upon you and your families. There you had no convenience whatsoever for a Sunday-school, for a prayer-meeting, or for a social gathering, all of which you are amply provided for here. There, as you found and as others found, worshiping assemblies could not be gathered after nightfall; and even your Sabbath worship was often marred by rude noises, necessary or unnecessary, in the streets: but what was yearly growing more unfavorable there will, we believe, yearly grow more favorable here. There you were isolated from other Christian churches, lacking all opportunity to welcome them to your sanctuary, for those general religious meetings occurring for the most part on secular days, which enter so largely into the present methods of the church; but here you can take your proper place in those evangelistic efforts which are common to the entire brotherhood, and so do your part toward fulfilling that blessed ministry by which each member is to supply unto the other members something which they lack, that the whole body may make increase to the edifying of itself in love.

Take this building, O thou great Head of the Church, to whom we now bring it. Take it, and take us with it. Make it thine own temple, and make us thy living temples. Use it for the glory of thy Kingdom, and keep us the loyal subjects of that Kingdom. Spare it only so long as it shall serve thy loving purposes, and spare and bless us only that we may declare thy name. When its noble walls must crumble, teach thy people to bow in the faith of something better to come; and when our spirits must be unclothed of their earthly house, may they rise to be clothed upon with the house which is from heaven!

NEW-BORN SOULS THE GLORY OF THE CHURCH.¹

And of Zion it shall be said, This and that man was born in her. —
PSALMS lxxxvii. 5.

THE assertion which these words contain is made three times in the brief Psalm from which they are taken. The Psalm itself is a celebration of the glory of Zion ; and that glory is made to spring out of the single fact that Zion is the birthplace of men. Nor is there any reference to natural or physical birth, as we shall see if we examine the words. It is as the birthplace of souls that Zion is celebrated. Out of her shall go forth a quickening power which shall touch and renew the spirits of men. This power is to reach Egypt and Babylon, Philistia, Tyre, and Ethiopia ; so that it shall be said of the dweller in the most remote of those countries, This man was born in Zion. If any church, as for instance this church, sends an influence to the other side of the globe, which there brings men to Christ, those men will regard this church as their spiritual birthplace. And so, too, will God regard it, not only now, but when He numbers His jewels in the end of the world. The language of the Psalm is, “The Lord shall count, when He writeth up the people, that this man was born there.”

¹ Preached December 26, 1875, the Sabbath after the dedication of the church.

We are therefore invited to consider the fact that Zion, either the whole Church or our own local Church, is distinctively the place where souls are converted to Christ. The glory of our Church is proportioned to its success in this work. It is in view of such a work that the Psalmist says, "Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God." The honor of our Church, throughout all time and in eternity, is to arise from the fact that God can point to one, and another, and another of the mighty host of the redeemed, and say, "This man and that man was born in her."

It will help us to feel the force of this statement if we consider a little how various places in our world have been ennobled by having the names of great and good men associated with them. Though the statement itself refers to spiritual things, there is in it an analogy to our more common and temporal life. How many localities there are in our world which we cross oceans to visit; whose names are household words, never spoken without sending a thrill through our hearts, yet in which we should not take the least interest but for the men who were born in them, or who there labored! The little district of Ayrshire, in Scotland, owes its fame to our admiration, our love, and our pity for the poet Robert Burns. Take his name away from it, and its charm would be gone. A statue was recently erected at Bedford in honor of John Bunyan; and how many of us would know that there is such a town in England but for the fact that Bunyan made it glorious by there writing, in its jail and in his blindness, the "Pilgrim's Progress"? The name of Kidderminster would be commonplace to us, associated as it is with the manufacture of a certain cheap style of carpet, were it not lifted up and en-

nobled by the fact that Richard Baxter there preached, and wrote his "Saint's Everlasting Rest." Stratford-upon-Avon is an ancient town, with buildings in it which appeal to the traveler's love of antiquity; but that which gives it its peculiar glory is the name of Shakspeare. Its people would sooner part with all else which distinguishes it than with this single treasure. The power of men to make illustrious the cities and countries which gave them birth is felt amid the ruins of Athens and of ancient Rome. How men search for the slightest traces of Homer; how they burrow for the palaces of Nimrod and Priam! What joy thrills the world of scholars when a Rosetta stone, a Moabite stone, or other key to some ancient alphabet is found! It is human footprints amid the remains of old civilizations, the evidence that men there struggled, and great minds thought and wrote, which make them venerable in our eyes. Go into any modern hamlet, even of our own land, and the first boast of its people will be the distinguished men it has given to the world. New Hampshire can never forget that it was the birthplace of Daniel Webster, nor Virginia that she produced Washington and Jefferson. The pride of our own city is, not her material prosperity, great as that may be, but the men born here, in every generation since the days of Franklin, whom the nations have delighted to honor.

But I need not follow this path any further. Enough has been said to make clear the fact that towns and cities and countries become illustrious just to the extent that they raise up men who confer great benefits on the race. They cannot depend on their wealth or their antiquity to make them respected. It is the names of those born in them, names shining as

stars, which make them glorious in the eyes of the world. Whatever else there may be in them which invites our notice, gathers all its charm from these.

Now this is the analogy which runs underneath the statement in our text. The serious lesson pressed home to us is, that our Church can grow beautiful and venerable only as it is the instrument of salvation to men; that it must do its proper work; that it cannot make itself respected by anything which appeals but to the senses; that God will bless it, and men will venerate it, only as they are able to point to new-born souls and say, "This man and that man was born in her."

But while we observe this analogy between the Church and common history, we are also to note a difference — a difference which is greatly in the Church's favor. It is exceptional men — men conspicuous for their great talents and achievements — who make their birthplaces famous in common history. But whosoever is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than these. Zion is not beholden for her glory to those who are great in human history. On the things which are least honorable she bestows more abundant honor, with a divine scorn of earthly distinctions. To be an immortal spirit is itself so great a thing that other greatness vanishes away in view of it. There is no exchange for the soul — for any soul. What shall it profit a man, though he be the weakest and humblest of men, if he gain the whole world at the cost of his soul? Therefore not only those disciples whom common history honors, but all others who are truly born of God, make Zion glorious. And hence it becomes purely a question of numbers, — not of numbers who are merely drawn together externally, but who

hear, who obey; who, in deed and in truth, bow to Christ as their King and the Saviour of their souls. No one could do more for the glory of the Church than the poor widow did when she gave her two mites. All souls are infinitely precious; and in view of this truth, the disciple most honored after the manner of men can well afford to stand on a level with the least honored. The same divine Comforter has begotten them all from the dead. God's well-beloved Son is the elder Brother of them all. There is no difference, but they all shine with an equal lustre, if they are indeed lively stones in the temple of our God. Are you the lowliest of God's children? O my dear friend, just believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and come with us after Him, and your birth into the kingdom here shall more honor our church than all this building with its goodly stones. I love to think that this peculiarity of the Church — all distinctions vanishing, and each one alike glorifying it before God — is observed in the sublime descriptions of heaven by St. John. There all the worshipers, however lifted up one above another for a little while on earth, constitute the one blessed host who bow before the throne of God and the Lamb. John saw that there were an hundred and forty and four thousand of them; but none of their names were given. Nothing was said of David and the other great men of Judah, but only that of the tribe of Judah were sealed twelve thousand; nothing was said of Samuel and other great men of his tribe, but only that there were sealed of his tribe twelve thousand. And so on through the remaining tribes. Each member of the bright-robed company is designated simply as a unit in the whole number, as this man or that man, with a sub-

lime disregard of all temporary distinctions. Every one of them is so precious that no one can be valued above another. They are all stars in the Redeemer's crown. Severally, and in clusters, they constitute the glory of the Church in which they were born.

Have you ever thought, my dear Christian brethren and friends, that a time is coming, in the far-off cycles of eternity, when these births of souls in the Church will be almost the only memorial left of this present world? You remember Christ said that His kingdom is not of this world; and in a great many places we read that the earth which we now inhabit, and the heavens around it, are to pass away. "They shall pass away with a great noise," says the apostle Peter; "and the elements shall melt with fervent heat; and the earth, and the works which are therein, shall be burned up." The solemn fact that what we now call the world is not to endure, but to perish when its purpose is fulfilled, our Lord notices again and again, and especially in the words to His disciples when He wept over Jerusalem. His kingdom, as all Scripture teaches, is the only everlasting kingdom, His government the only one of which there shall be no end. And you, if you obey Christ, are the subjects of that government; you, in virtue of your union to the Son of God, are citizens of that kingdom. And you shall stand before that divine King in His imperishable realm, when the great globe, with its cloud-capped towers and gorgeous palaces, has disappeared from view. In that clear and eternal day, you will be this poor earth's memorial. You will stand there as its monument, and will recall it to the minds of the heavenly choirs, as you move about in their shining company. Great events of a temporal nature, and volumes of secular

history, now filling so large a space in our horizon, bear no relation to that endless life. As a vesture they change, and shall be changed. They shall be folded up and laid aside; but God's years cannot fail, and our new life which we have in Him shall never end. Renewed and purified souls, dwelling in that bright country, will forever keep fresh the names of the churches on earth where they first tasted the good word of God. Those places most intimately connected with Christ's work, and where the largest number of souls have been born into His kingdom, will most attract the gaze of the heavenly inhabitants.

Of course Bethlehem, where Christ was born, as this pleasant Christmas-tide reminds us, can never be forgotten. All the work of salvation, here and throughout the world, comes within the mission of Christ. His cross makes our entire globe sacred, and embalms it forevermore. No angel or archangel can be indifferent to a world on which He lived and taught, and where He laid down His life that an estranged race might be redeemed. The stars, which are the churches, may shine in their strength; but He will walk in the midst of them, He will hold them in His right hand. He is the Head of the Church universal, of that one great Zion which includes all lesser Zions. Unto the gates of this common Zion new-born souls are continually pressing. The north gives up, the south keeps not back; the sons come from far, and her daughters from the ends of the earth. The tents of Kedar, the desert lands, and the islands are looking unto her, whence the perfection of beauty shone. These gatherings into the family of God will never be forgotten. When the spirits of just men have ceased to ask about great empires and

famous battles, they will wish to know the histories of their glorified companions, — of this man, who was born of God in China; of that man, who was born of God in Madagascar; of one, and another, and another, more than we can count, of whom it shall be said that they were born in Zion: some on the sea, and some on the land; some in the forests, and some in the cities; some in that pagan country, and some in this centre of Christian light. They were all born, not of flesh and blood, nor of the will of man, but of God; and they will keep fresh throughout eternal ages the names of the places where their new life began. The name of Philippi will be kept fresh by the jailer who there believed on the Lord Jesus Christ. Athens will be remembered for the sake of Dionysius and the woman named Damaris. There are long lists of names, both in the Old Testament and the New, which we are apt to “skip” in our reading of the Bible. They are hard to pronounce, and without meaning in our ears. But those names belong to God’s saints. They are precious in His eyes, and He has graven them on the palms of His hands. It is well for us that we have them; for they are a constant admonition to us of the new light which is to break over this world in the far-off future. Our present way of looking at things is to be entirely reversed. What we now regard as obscure or unmeaning will then shine forth as the sun, and personages and events now venerable in our eyes will sink down out of sight. It is possible that in heaven we shall hear no such names spoken as Alexander, and Cæsar, and Napoleon; but we shall there hear such names as Priscilla, and Junia, and Amplias, and Tryphena, and Sosipater, and Stephanas, and Archippus, and Pudens,

and Claudia. All those hard names shall grow easy and familiar to us in the celestial dialect, as we trace them one after another to the redeemed spirits who bear them; as we look back with that blessed multitude, and realize that our conversion to Christ was the one thing which gave our earthly life all its value. I love to turn over the pages of church manuals, especially those of our own. There whole columns of names meet my eye, which have for me almost no meaning. But I know that they have a meaning, which shall one day come to me. The stars are invisible to my mortal sight; but I shall see them, shining as the brightness of the firmament, when I have entered into the kingdom of my Father. Everything else in regard to our beloved Church may be forgotten, — all its external history, all its houses of worship, all secular events connected with it; but the long succession of redeemed souls, whose names are a blank to us, shall keep its memory fresh and immortal. How glad the experience, while we are sitting together on those heavenly hills, talking over all the way by which our Lord led us in this Church, if we shall see a large company gathering about us, listening intently, and saying, as often as they catch the dear name, “This one, and that one, was born in her;” and so introducing themselves to us as our kindred in Christ after an especial manner!

Now why will we not take up the words of the text this morning, and make them the voice of our solemn purpose before God? It shall be said of Zion, that this and that man was born in her. It may be great boldness in me, and it may seem very bold in you, dear Christian brethren, thus to resolve with ourselves in our hearts. But why fear to have this determina-

tion fixed in us, as we look round upon our friends who yet hesitate? Is there any one among us whom we shall fail to bring into the kingdom, if we earnestly set about it in the way God has appointed? No matter who it is, whose name comes into your thoughts in this solemn hour, you may have faith in God's promise concerning him; you may dare to affirm that he shall be born in this Zion. Parents may dare to say it of their children, teachers of their scholars, friend of friend, and neighbor of neighbor. Great is the power of prayer; great is the power of Christian example; great is the power of gentle but persistent entreaty; and all these are within your power. These are the weapons of our warfare, not carnal, but spiritual; and God will make them mighty, while we faithfully use them, to the accomplishment of our strong desire.

Dear friends not yet born of the Spirit, you see how much the glory of Christ's kingdom depends on you. It is you that He came to seek and save. It is for your sake that He has set up His throne; that He lived, and died, and rose again; that He ascended up on high, where He intercedes at the right hand of the Father. Your individual wills are concerned in that which alone is to make our earth memorable. The sublimest event which the sun looks on in all his circuit is the entrance of a soul into the life which is hid with Christ in God. It is the only experience possible to you in this world which shall shine more brightly upon you the farther you go forward into the future; and when other events and experiences are dimmed, and folded up with the forgotten past, this, ever revealing to you its deeper depths of joy and sweetness, shall be to you the far more exceeding and

eternal weight of glory. All that is said and done here by the devoted members of this Church, or by its pastors one after another, cannot preserve its memory if it ceases to be the birthplace of souls. It appeals to you to perpetuate its name. By your entrance into Christ's service here, but by no other means, can anything be done which shall cause it to be had in everlasting remembrance.

Think of all the thousands whose lives have ended during the year now about to close. They were the young and the old, the mighty and the weak, the rich and the poor, the well known and the unknown, the successful and the disappointed. But what are all these things to them now,—their ambitions, their struggles, their triumphs, their failures, their rivalries, their loves and their hates? So much, and only so much to them, is this temporal life and all that pertains to it, as they will be to you far sooner than you think,—a dream when one awaketh. Oh that morning, that everlasting morning, in which we shall exchange the seeming for the real, the evanescent for the eternal! What is the inheritance to which you shall then awake? Shall you then be startled by the terrific words, "Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things," or shall you rise up joyfully to meet your Lord, in the great company of those to whom it shall be said, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you before the foundation of the world"?

OBEYING THE HEAVENLY VISION.

Whereupon, O King Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision. — ACTS xxvi. 19.

ST. PAUL here declares to us just how it was that his wonderful life, as a Christian and a missionary to the Gentiles, began: he obeyed the heavenly vision in which the will of God concerning him was brought to his knowledge.

What is this heavenly vision? Are any of us seeing it at the present time? And if we are, what are some of the reasons why we should be obedient to it?

To the first of these questions, What is the heavenly vision? I answer that it is anything by which God calls men to His service in the kingdom of His Son. Sometimes the heavenly vision is to those already in the Church of Christ, — calling them to some special service, such as the ministry, the missionary work, the serving of tables, the instruction of the young. “He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers.” And he that ministereth is to wait on His ministry; he that teacheth, on His teaching; he that exhorteth, on exhortation; he that giveth, on His giving; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that showeth mercy, with cheerfulness. These various kinds and departments of work, to which God calls men in the Church, are for the perfecting of the saints, the edifying of the body of Christ, till we come unto the measure of the

stature of the fullness of Christ. But God calls men into His kingdom before assigning them to special spheres in it. The heavenly vision is not for believers only, it is more especially for unbelievers. St. Paul connected all his labors as an apostle back with his experience in the road to Damascus. That is the experience on which he lays special stress in speaking before King Agrippa. The heavenly vision came to him while he was a persecutor exceedingly mad against the name of Jesus of Nazareth, breathing out threatenings and slaughter after the fleeing Christians. There was something peculiar in the form, and in the degree of force, with which the Divine will was made known to him; but substantially his experience did not differ from that of all men whom God calls by His Spirit to repent of their sins and come after Christ. No outward miracle or manifestation is essential to the idea of this heavenly vision. It may be wholly inward and spiritual, unnoticed by all save those to whom God vouchsafes it. Have you had the fact revealed to you that your life does not conform to the law of God? Have you felt uneasy, disturbed, restless over the fact that you must meet God after death, and give an account of the deeds done in the body? Under the pressure of this guilt and fear, have you at times been half persuaded to commit your soul to Christ's keeping? Any persons who have thus felt, and been thus moved, have had the heavenly vision. There are very few in Christian lands who have been wholly without it. Some have obeyed it, and are now following Christ, in covenant with Him and His people; others have been disobedient to it, and stand yet apart, as they did before the vision came, from the company of the ransomed. Agrippa

had the heavenly vision when he said, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian." Felix received this same vision when he trembled at the preaching of Paul, and said, "Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season I will call for thee." The well-instructed scribe, not far from the kingdom of God, saw this vision. It visited the young ruler, and he rejected it; the woman of Samaria, and she embraced it. Very many persons of whom we read in Scripture are mentioned chiefly to notice the fact that they received the heavenly vision, and to make them a warning or an example to us, according as they heeded that vision or were disobedient unto it.

Seeing, now, what this heavenly vision is, I think no one of us can say that we have all our lives long been wholly without it. I think we must own, without exception, that it has come to us many times; that it has hovered before us from the time to which our memory goes back, — now obscured by devotion to earthly affairs, now revealing itself more vividly as our souls have been turned to it in quickened and earnest thought. Are there not some here to whom that vision is coming to-day? They are now feeling their sinfulness against God, and their need of Christ and His salvation. They cannot resist the feeling that somehow Jesus of Nazareth is passing by them, as He passed by the way in which Bartimæus was sitting. And they feel within them an impulse to cry out, even as he cried, saying, "Have mercy on me, thou Son of David." They feel the impulse; that is, the heavenly vision: will they yield to that impulse and commit their souls to Christ, or will they be disobedient to it? As vessels headed toward the harbor feel the breeze which comes up from the ocean and

fills their sails, so are there those here, I believe, who feel the sweet gales of the divine love blowing upon them, and who are half persuaded to weigh anchor, and enter into the rest and shelter which are offered them in Christ Jesus. But will they be wholly persuaded? Will they obey the heavenly vision, or resist it? Will they be Pauls, or Felixes and Agrippas? The vision may never again be so distinct as it now is; the sense of personal unworthiness so full and penetrating, the glory of Christ so bright and ravishing, the life of godliness so noble and attractive. You see the city of refuge, its shining domes, its strong towers, its safe walls with their gates open to receive you: will you hasten into it while the impulse is strong upon your soul, or wait till the avenger of blood overtakes you? Almost is not wholly. Conviction of sin is not faith in Christ. To feel that you ought to repent is not the same thing as repentance. You may hear Christ knock, but that is not opening the door and letting Him in. He may be passing by, but that does not bring you to His feet. Though He is to be found, you will find Him only as you seek Him. He is near, but that will not save you if you refuse to call upon Him. You have the heavenly vision; it is on the question of your obedience to it that your salvation turns. You see the feast which is spread for you in your Lord's house, but you will never taste its blessed viands so long as you only stand at the open door wishing you were a partaker, yet refusing to go in.

We had occasion, several months ago, to see the great interest taken by scientific men in the transit of the planet Venus across the sun's disk. The event was anticipated for years. Much costly, delicate, and complicated apparatus was got ready, with a view to

accurate observations and measurements when the phenomenon should occur. Expeditions, in charge of famous astronomers, were sent with this apparatus to remote parts of the world. No precaution was neglected, in the hope of gaining, at some one of the points visited, such data as might be used to solve important problems respecting the earth and sun, and their relations to each other. Now Christ comes between the human soul and God, as the planet Venus came between the earth and the sun. He is the lustrous gem of our evening twilight, He our bright and morning star. We see Him every day, as we may see the beautiful planet often; but only now and then, in rare and precious moments, does He come between us and God so as to constitute the heavenly vision. Ordinarily our relations to God are not revealed to us in any striking and convincing way. We listen to the truth, we read the words of Christ, we meditate respecting our duty, in a certain half attentive way, much as we cast a casual glance daily at the spangled firmament. These common views of Christ come and go, and leave but little impression behind them. Only once in a great while is the feeling of what we owe to God borne in upon our souls. Then is the real transit-hour. Then it becomes us to be ready, with all our powers and faculties, to heed each slightest intimation; to obey the impulse of the Holy Spirit before He passes by us, and leaves us still in our worldliness and sins. Who can tell what the fate of the mailed warrior Saul would have been if he had not obeyed the voice which spoke to him in the very moment of the heavenly vision? It would almost seem that he had his own wondrous escape in view when he said, "It is impossible for those who

were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put Him to an open shame." God was revealed to Judas in Christ Jesus; but he, refusing to obey the heavenly vision, went back into darkness, and became "the son of perdition." He, too, might have won the crown of righteousness which fadeth not away, if he had bowed to the vision of God in Christ, saying, with the penitent near Damascus, "Lord, what wilt thou have me do?" Jerusalem was destroyed because she knew not the time of her visitation. "Oh that thou hadst known, even thou, in this thy day!" is the compassionate cry which her rejected King lifts over her. The heavenly vision may come too late to be of any avail if it be slighted. Esau comprehended the value of his birthright when he had lost it. Judas saw Christ after the betrayal as he had not seen Him before; and the consciousness of what he had wickedly lost drove him to desperation. "Behold the bridegroom cometh," was the voice heard at midnight; but it was too late for the foolish virgins. The great opportunity had been theirs, and they had slighted it. It went from them, never to return, while they slumbered and slept. "As thy servant was busy here and there, he was gone." You have your chance, that is, to obey the voice in which God calls you; but if you refuse to hearken, that chance is taken away. All our common experience is according to this truth. That the heavenly vision leaves us worse off than it found us, if we refuse to obey it, is a law of life embodied in those oft-quoted words, —

“There is a tide in the affairs of men
Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune;
Omitted, all the voyage of their life
Is bound in shallows and in miseries.”

What a dreadful moment it was for Judas Iscariot when he went unto the enemies of Christ, overwhelmed with feelings of guilt, exclaiming, “I have sinned in that I have betrayed innocent blood,” and hearing from them only the cold reply, “What is that to us? see thou to that.” Oh, how inexorable sin is! How the tempter turns upon the poor soul which has yielded to his temptations, seeming to take a fiendish delight in its exquisite tortures! I do not mean to intimate that God calls but once, with His special call of mercy, to each erring soul; nor that He may be now calling for the last time to any of us. Very likely we have heard that call repeatedly. Possibly those who hear it to-day may hear it again. But how unwise to presume! We cannot predict the action of God’s Spirit, as we can the conjunctions of the heavenly bodies. It bloweth where it listeth; and one of the strongest reasons why you should listen to it, while hearing the sound thereof, is the fact that you cannot tell whence it cometh, nor whither it goeth. Over against the comforting truth that God is merciful and long-suffering, there is another truth which we do well to consider. The Scriptures clearly teach that there is a limit to the manifestations of His saving mercy. There is a time, though we know not when, at which the harvest is past, and the summer ended. The length of our day of grace is not revealed to us; but “the night cometh,” said our Saviour, “in which no man can work.” The door stands open, and no man can shut it; yet the hour cometh when it shall be shut

and no man can open it. We are in the way with our adversary, and that way may be long; yet it has an end sooner or later, nor is there hope for us any more when once we have been cast into prison. When we consider the destinies of the soul, and how its endless future is to be shaped by its own action, either bringing it into peace with God or shutting it away from His presence, this thought of a limit to our probation gathers tremendous force; we tremble at the bare possibility that an hour should come, though it may be very far off, when God will withdraw from us, — when He will shut up the window in heaven from which His face now shines in love on the unwilling soul, and speak those awful words: “Because I have called, ye refused; I have stretched out my hand and no man regarded, but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh.”

If there be any here whose minds have been impressed, or whom God is calling to forsake their sins and come after Christ, do they consider that this may be the turning-point in their lives, — the crisis of their whole spiritual history, either for good or evil? They are like the children of Israel at Kadesh-Barnea, to whom the spies brought back a report from the Land of Promise. You remember their action, and what came of it. They were on the southern border of Canaan. Egypt, Pharaoh, the Red Sea, the wilderness, Sinai, lay far behind them. In a space of time supposed to be about two years they had traversed the desert, and were now in sight of their inheritance. The twelve chosen men, sent to search out the land, returned to them while they waited here, bringing

back the report that Canaan was a goodly land, and showing the cluster of grapes from Eshcol as a proof of its fruitfulness. Only a single prompt and courageous movement from the whole host was needed to put them in possession of the country to which they had come. But they hesitated, and their courage failed them. They turned back into the wilderness. And, of all the thousands who that day refused to grasp the prize which lay within their reach, not one ever again came within sight of it. They perished to a man, all who had murmured against the Lord and Moses during the forty years of desert wanderings. Now, that we are to apply to ourselves, in a spiritual sense, this chapter of Jewish history, is clear from the use made of it in the Epistle to the Hebrews. Christ Jesus, the Redeemer of the world, brought near to us by the influences of the Holy Spirit, is the Canaan to whose borders we are come. Shall we enter into our rest while it is called to-day, or shall we fall through the same example of unbelief? How soon the heavenly vision, now clear to our minds, will grow dim and fade away, if we go back from it into our life of worldliness and sin!

What reason have we to believe that God will be better to us than He was to Israel of old? If they were left to eat the fruit of their doings, why should not we be filled with our own devices? He swore unto them that they should not enter into His rest; and what right have we to hope that He will again bring us near to His salvation, if we count the blood of the covenant an unholy thing, and do despite to the Spirit of Grace? "If the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward, how shall we escape if

we neglect so great salvation?" Having come near to Christ, and been almost persuaded to believe on Him, if you now hesitate, dear friend, will not the pillar of cloud remove, and stand behind you, in token of a sorer displeasure than overtook Israel? Who can tell what long years of forgetfulness of God are before you, if you now refuse to take the decisive step toward Him? What wanderings into doubt, unbelief, sin, hatred of the gospel, neglect and contempt of the means of grace, till at last you shall end a restless and unlovely life, without God and without hope in the world! You may even now be turning back toward all this sin and woe, if you refuse the voice which speaks unto you from heaven!

It may be, dear friend, that you hesitate to obey the heavenly vision which God is now vouchsafing you, fearing lest you should find yourself alone, and without human sympathy, in it. Even if you should be alone, not another soul in all the world ready to come with you after Christ, your duty is the same. Saul of Tarsus was thus alone when he saw and heard, and nobly obeyed. But the strong probability is that you would not find yourself alone; and this is another reason why you should be obedient to the vision. In religion, as in a great many other matters of common concern, mankind move together in masses. Waves of secular excitement, now on this and now on that subject, sweep over nations and over the world. Extended religious awakenings are natural. They come about in conformity to this social law to which all men are subject. Therefore, when you find your own mind deeply moved or interested on the question of religious duty, you may take it for granted that others about you are moved in like manner. The heavenly

vision is not for you alone, but for many. They are hesitating, as you are tempted to hesitate; and your obedience may be the needed power which shall bring them, together with yourself, over to the Lord's side. Christ rebuked the Jews, saying that they did not enter into His kingdom themselves, and hindered those who would enter. How do you know that that rebuke is not applicable to you? Very likely there are other souls standing just where you stand, who would go in if they should see you go, and who hesitate because they see you hesitating. This is the social law; and the responsibility which it implies is something fearful in the case of an awakened soul. Think of this, parents, whose children wait to see how you propose to act in this matter of religious duty. Think of it, wife, husband, young man, young woman, neighbor, friend, employer; remember, when God calls you to come after Him, how many others are watching, ready to do as they see you do in this whole great concern. Thus it is that God has made us one another's keepers. No man of us liveth to himself. We live to those about us, who are one with us in the mystic bond of kindred and sympathy. If we abuse this power, we know not whose blood may cry out against us; if we improve it, following the voice which calls us, we shall not enter alone into glory, but bringing many sons with us. When Joshua asked all the people to choose between God and Baal, he first assured them, before they had time to choose, that as for himself and his house they would serve the Lord; and instantly all the people, bowing to the same impulse which he had thus openly obeyed, exclaimed, "God forbid that we should forsake the Lord; we will serve the Lord, for He is our God." Let that great example teach you

that any impulse toward Christ which you may feel in your soul is a talent entrusted to your keeping. Others stand ready to follow you, as they see you following Christ. Hinder them not by burying or hiding your Lord's money, but make the five talents other five, the two talents other two, by so acting that what you do shall help others into the kingdom.

But if this obligation be upon those whom the Spirit is now turning toward Christ, how solemn the responsibility of His professed and recognized followers! Dear Christian friends, we who hope to sit together with Christ at His own table in the kingdom of His Father and our Father, are we obeying the heavenly vision? Our divine Master has told us that we are the light of the world, and has commanded us to let our light so shine that others, seeing our good works, shall glorify our Father in heaven. St. Paul was obedient, not merely in the way to Damascus, but ever after, in all his arduous ministry and apostleship, till he had finished his course. No one could look on him and say that he was careful and troubled about the things of this world, or that he sought for anything, even in his religious zeal, save the glory of Christ and the salvation of men. Are these sublime objects the paramount motive by which we are inspired? Is this the blessed sentence which all are forced to pass upon us who behold our daily lives? Let us consider, as we look back through the months, how much time, prayer, and effort we have given to this great work, which is the special work Christ has called us to perform. Alas for us, if neglecting this, we have been chiefly concerned with matters which turn away the mind from Christ and His salvation, and which make His glorious name repulsive, rather

than beautiful and winning, to those about us! We are not in a fit frame of mind to consider any interest of the Church, save as our souls are bent with all their energies toward those great and sacred objects for which Christ came into our world. Let us, therefore, compel everything else to take the secondary and subordinate place. Let us force every question to wait for its proper answer, till we are sure that we have the mind and will of Christ. Being full of His Spirit, seeking supremely, and with one heart, the gathering into His kingdom of the souls for which He died, we shall easily adopt those forms and methods which are best suited to our holy purpose; and our friends and kindred about us, seeing that we are devoted to the heavenly vision more than to any or all things else, will, through the blessing of God upon our faithfulness, be persuaded to be obedient to it also.

HOLY MEN THE WORLD'S GREAT HOPE.

Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect. — MATT. v. 48.

CHRIST has to do with men themselves rather than with something which merely pertains to them. He could say, as every one who has caught His spirit can say, "I seek not yours, but you." No doubt He contemplated, more joyously than any of us ever has, the prophetic vision of a perfect world. But the prime object which He sought, and which He has bid us who succeed Him in His kingdom seek, is perfect men and women: by the perfecting of them is the perfect world to come.

The text gives us, in a hortatory form, the main theme of the Sermon on the Mount, in which it occurs. If you study the beatitudes at the opening of that sermon, you will find that the blessings there promised are for the morally perfect, — the pure-hearted, the righteous, the peacemakers, the merciful, the lowly in spirit. That standard of a perfect outward life, which the old law set up, Christ here takes and applies to the whole inward life of men. Outward forms of prayer, and of fasting, and of almsgiving are not enough. The spirit out of which these naturally come is what Christ requires. It is the adultery of the heart which He denounces, and He admonishes us that if we hate our brother we are murderers. We are not to give in the hope of receiving some return: that

is only lending, as sinners may lend to sinners. We are to do good hoping for nothing. We are to love our enemies. We are to pray for them which despitefully use us and persecute us. We are to be like God's rain and sunshine, which He sends upon the evil and the good, upon the just and the unjust. What Christ sought in those who heard Him there, what He still seeks in His followers and in all mankind, is that we may be perfect, as our Father in heaven is perfect. The whole aim of the gospel is better men and better women; men and women all the time becoming more like God, morally and spiritually better in each generation, till there shall be a new heaven and a new earth.

Let us see now, dear friends, what Christ and His gospel, and all His true followers, have to say to the various classes of persons who are dreaming about perfection of one kind or another in the world.

1. Take first the man who is dreaming of a perfect system of human philosophy. There are many such men, hardly any two of whom entirely agree. Yet each one believes that a body of thought which shall include all truth is attainable. They have been at work now several thousand years, and seem to be quite as much at variance as ever. Nay, it is no uncommon thing for a single great thinker to change his theories of man and nature, and of their origin and destiny, again and again in the course of a long life of study and investigation. Now the gospel comes to one of these men, and says to him, "What are you trying to do?" He replies, "I am trying to frame a perfect philosophy. My object is, to account for the existence of the world, or at least for the changes through which it has come to its present state; to explain the

various forms of life which we see about us ; to find the law which regulates the earth and everything pertaining to it in their onward progress ; to show what mind and thought are, and what conscience is ; to account for man's dread of death and hope of immortality ; to tell what the future of our planet is to be, and how men may most rationally spend their present lives." "But," says the gospel to such an one, "these are profound and intricate problems of which you speak. What are the instruments with which you hope to solve them?" "I rely upon the powers of my own mind," says the philosopher. "Ah, yes," says the gospel of Christ to him, "but have you duly considered those powers? You will confess that they are limited and imperfect, as all true philosophers do. They have often misled you. You dare not trust them. When you have thought out any great subject, you go over your thinking again and again ; and then you call trusted friends to your aid, in the hope that all errors may be eliminated. Then you publish your work ; and if it be not immediately condemned and thrown aside, even if it is much admired at first, human speculation outgrows it in a few years, and some one else's theory, transitory like yours, takes its place. And what does all this teach you? Why, it teaches you that you must have perfect men to do the thinking before you can have a perfect philosophy. Now just here is my mission in the world. I have set up a kingdom, and committed it to my followers, the whole aim of which is to make better men and women. It is the office of Christianity to improve the instruments with which philosophy must do its work. You must be lifted up out of yourself ; you must be drawn into union with God, partake of His

nature, and become perfect as He is perfect, or you cannot work out a system of thought which shall contain no error, but only truth. All progress, in any sphere of discovery, is dependent on better instruments. John Locke and Immanuel Kant, who are still the two great leaders of human speculation, bent their whole energy to this one point. They sought to give philosophy an instrument which should lead it into the truth only. But they both failed. For they did not enough consider the need which the mind itself, the soul, the spirit of man, has to be made better." Thus does the gospel speak, dear friends; and it applies itself to just the work which other systems so strangely neglect. It says: "Let your dream of a perfect philosophy go, and first seek to become yourself perfect. Your thinking must ever partake of the imperfection which is in you. Therefore seek the kingdom of God; for God must dwell in you, and you in Him, before you can solve the mystery of this universe which He has made."

2. Again, the gospel comes to the statesman, to him who would frame a perfect government in the earth, and uses similar words. How many statesmen, alas, have mocked at Christ! Some, who have stood highest in the councils of nations, who have cast down old governments and set up new ones, have frankly owned that the whole subject of religion was one which did not interest them. Nor did they care whether or not the minds of the people, for whom they were making constitutions and laws, were interested in Christ and His salvation. Such men have often been prodigious workers, endowed with large intellect, and withal of pure and upright intent. But the perfect government has not come, — the govern-

ment which stands sure, and which does the work for which it was designed. Where is the fault? Certainly not always in the theory. That may be well enough, but it fails in the hands of those who are to administer and sustain it. However right or strong in itself, it is made weak by the imperfections and the sinfulness of men. This is why governments fail; not because they are empires, or monarchies, or aristocracies, or republics, but because they must be carried on by selfish and wicked men. Let all that selfishness and wickedness be wholly done away, and let men be perfected in their moral and spiritual nature, and the statesman's dream would come true. How insane, then, the opposition of rulers and lawgivers to Christ! He comes to do just that on which the success of their work, so far as they are upright in purpose, depends. Surely, if an undevout astronomer is mad, twice mad is the statesman who scorns Christ, or who does not toil and pray for the triumph of His kingdom. Christ says in effect: No matter what name you call your government by, but take hold with me, and to the extent that my work is done shall your highest hopes be fulfilled. Have in yourselves the same mind which you find in me, — my justice, my love, my tenderness, my pity, my firm hold on God and the eternal verities which centre in Him. Have all this, and you will be saved from error in building and administering the state. You will be perfect, as your Father in heaven is, and hence there will be no flaws in the work you are doing for your country. And the success of your work does not depend wholly on you, but the people also must be made to love justice, mercy, and truth, or what you are doing will sooner or later fail. — Thus does Christ speak to all patriots,

dear friends. He shows them that the salvation from sin, which He brings to men, is essential to the success of their work. He concerns himself not at all with their theories and devices, their checks and balances, and trying to make two wrongs work out right by putting them against each other. With all this Christ will not meddle, save to show how utterly it must fail, if men are not redeemed and lifted up to God, and sanctified and blessed by His gospel. And whose work is most essential to the state? Not the statesman's certainly, but that which Christ proposes. Christ deals directly with men. So far as His work is done, the people cease to be criminal, vicious, ignorant, fickle; and they become unselfish, pure, industrious, law-abiding, thus taking away almost all need of the civil power. The ideal government awaits the triumph of Christianity in the world. When all men truly believe on the Son of God, and are full of His Spirit, we shall know what it is for a nation, yes, for many nations, to be born in a day.

3. Again, Christ has a message for all those who are busy with social problems, who are trying to work out some theory of human society which shall exclude all evil. Some of these theories are too grossly immoral to be named. Some of them, which do not go so far as to subvert the family, yet deny the rights of property, and especially of ownership in the land. The relations of capital and labor to each other, honest money, the right or wrong of what are called "strikes," and the whole question of wages, are each receiving a great deal of attention. What shall children be taught in the public schools? Is city life or country life most conducive to social purity? What is the influence of model lodging-houses? How can

raw immigrants be most wisely worked into our American society? Is it an evil, or is it not, that so many live in hotels rather than in private homes; that there is so much foreign travel, and so much going from city to city, with no special attachment to any one place, throughout our land? Certainly here are questions enough. And there are men enough at work upon them, who hold all shades of view as to what should or what should not be done. But to all these Christ comes, and He speaks the same word to them as to every other. He says:— Stop your theorizing and speculating, and concern yourself more directly with the men and women about you. Their moral and spiritual elevation is the only thing which can save human society. Why do you think to make the stream pure, as long as the fountain is corrupt? What barriers can you erect which a depraved nature will not break through? First cast the salt into the springs of human conduct, and then all the waters flowing therefrom will be healed. When the grace of God is in the hearts of all men, and abounds therein, every social evil and wrong will be done away. Your vision of a perfect state of society is a dream; and you wake up to find that you have only dreamed, as often as there is a new outbreak of wicked passions in the community about you. But just so far as the people about you are delivered from sin, made new creatures, their souls redeemed and sanctified, holy in their spirit and life, perfect as their heavenly Father is perfect, you need have no fear for human society. It will take care of itself. Whatever its external arrangements, justice and truth will abound in it, nor shall there be anything to hurt or destroy in all the holy mountain.

4. As to these, so to those who are troubled about

the organization of the church, Christ comes to turn them away from that to His own proper work. Some would organize the church with a view to making preaching prominent; others would make a liturgy overshadow the preaching. Some would see the church wholly controlled by the clergy, others wholly by the membership as such. Some would see woman take the same share as man in ecclesiastical matters; others would confine her to a special sphere. Some would multiply meetings; others say that already there are too many. Some would organize the church so that it shall repress feeling, emotion, and enthusiasm; others would have it stimulate these. Some greatly exalt the sacraments, or would have them administered only in a particular way; others would subordinate them to the teaching of doctrine and practical duties. But Christ comes and says: You can never get a perfect church by such means as these. Your church will grow better only as you yourselves are better, and as you concern yourself for the growth of your brethren in holiness. Nor will you ever convert the world by your machinery, but by your direct efforts in men's behalf. — How much energy and time and money are wasted, dear friends, on these external arrangements of the church! Theory after theory of its proper organization is thought out, shown by faultless logic to be the best, tried at great cost, and then, after a little, is thrown aside for something else. "Let all this alone," is the message of the gospel to us. "There is but one thing which will unite the church, and that is the devotion of all its members to the saving of a lost world." Who ever heard of divisions among Christians, or of any trouble as to how the church shall be constituted, while their eye

was single to this great work? Men make the denominations, but God makes the church. And we shall not co-work with Him in His blessed office till we think more of men and less of systems; till we would rather save a soul from death than advance some pet theory of ours. Our love for human souls must be perfect, like our heavenly Father's. As His rain and sunshine come down to bless all alike, so our lives must bring spiritual life to the dead in sin. When we are thus perfect in our love for lost men, and they are made better by our influence upon them, the church will be increased and edified. It will take that organization which is natural to it in its circumstances; yet its power in the world will not be due to its organization, but to the fact that its members, forgetting themselves and all special forms, and heeding only what Christ the Lord has said, are everywhere pleading with men to believe on Him. In whatever sphere, therefore, our lot may be cast, — in that of the thinker, in the state, in society, in the care of the church, — let us bear in mind that perfection can come only as mankind are made perfect in Christ.

Perhaps you say that this puts all our ideals very far off. Not so far off as we may think, dear friends, if we will but turn from our devices, and do the work Christ gives us with our might. If, as some hold, the world is not growing spiritually better, but worse, we ought not to wonder. Christ's followers, even those who toil and pray for the world's deliverance from sin, are doing almost nothing compared with what they might do toward that blessed result. They are inventing theories, and laying out their strength on general measures, while they strive not to be perfect themselves before God, and to bring as many souls as they

can lay hold of to Christ. If Christ must come again, before His work is done in the world, that second coming must be to call back His people from the many paths into which they have wandered, and to fill them with His own great love for men yet in their sins. But the Holy Spirit was sent to do that for us, dear friends; and if all Christians were but filled with His divine fire, there would soon be a redeemed world waiting to receive Christ when He comes back to it.

What if Christ Himself had been imperfect, or at all sinful, dear friends? Could He have done His saving work all the same? Could He have been the perfect teacher of religious truth that He was? Certainly not. He was the truth, and therefore He could speak the truth. He could give to the world only what was in Himself. He could not have given us a perfect religion if He had not been Himself perfect. And He is our example, our pattern. He encourages us to hope that we may reach the measure and stature of His fullness. The Spirit of the Lord, dwelling in us, can change us into His image. And only as we are thus changed from glory to glory can we be safe guides to others, and surely build up His kingdom in the world.

What does the story of Adam, and of the garden in which God put him, teach us, if not that where men are perfect all things about them will be perfect? Men make their world. So long as they are good, the world about them is good; and when they become evil, the world in which they are grows evil. It was so at the beginning. The Lord God caused the ground to bear briars and thorns after man had sinned, though the same ground had borne only what was pleasant to the eye and the taste while man was

innocent. Yes, what man himself was in his own person, morally and spiritually before God, such all things about him tended to become.

And is not the same great lesson taught us in the descriptions of heaven which we have? Nothing that defileth is there. The lively stones, of which it is builded, are the redeemed saints washed and made white. Such as they are is the place in which they eternally dwell. They, by their pure presence, make the city. Though God is the light, and the Lamb the glory, yet their righteousness is the clean linen, the harvest of holiness in them is the twelve manner of fruits, their perfection of soul makes the city four square, and their communion is the everlasting song.

Oh, dear friends, how unspeakably sad that so few have learned the great lesson of our text! Let us begin to learn it to-day. May the past suffice for us to have laid ourselves out on other things, and henceforth may it be our whole study how we, and all whom we can reach, may be made more and more like Christ! The world would not be evil if man were not evil, and it will be good only so fast as he becomes good. "Be ye perfect" is the one behest which we should shout in men's ears unto the ends of the earth. For only as those words are obeyed can there be a new heaven and a new earth. As you, and I, and one and another about us, cease from all other devices, and begin to repeat in our lives the loving ministry of our divine Master, errors and mistakes will begin to vanish out of the church, out of society, out of the state, out of systems of human thought, and the morning of the day in which the earth shall be full of the knowledge and glory of God will begin to dawn.

CONSCIENCE.

These, having not the law, are a law unto themselves. — ROM. ii. 14.

IT is well for the shipmaster, feeling his way along rocky coasts and amongst shoals and currents, if he can always see the heavenly bodies, and have beacons and lighthouses to sail by. But when sun and stars are shut in, and he is far out from the land, enveloped in mists, he thinks of his compass and chart, and runs to them for direction.

And so it is well for us, while navigating the shoaly sea of moral and religious opinion, if we can always have the right course made unmistakable to us. But should all external helps disappear, and we be left, amid darkness and perplexities, to find out our course as best we may, still we are not in a desperate case. We, like the other mariner, have a counselor on board to which we may resort; and when the great light out of the heavens has vanished, the lamp from the binnacle still sends a ray forward into the gloom.

This lamp, which you carry with you, and which is your last resource in perplexed questions of right and wrong, has been named Conscience in our every-day speech. The apostle refers to this in the words of the text. The unchristianized world, whose corruptions he has just been portraying, and which make so dark a picture, cannot plead total ignorance as an excuse for their sins. They have not those external helps such as nations blessed with the Scriptures possess,

but they have conscience, — an inward monitor, — whose suggestions it is safe for them to follow. That law which David rejoiced in — which was pure, enlightening his eyes, and by which he was warned against sin — had never been revealed to them; and yet, by virtue of certain inherent powers, they had a law, — yea, were a law unto themselves.

Now, if this could be said of an untaught pagan, much more can it be said of each one of us. You, my hearer, in all questions of duty toward God or toward men, are a law unto yourself. There is a touchstone in your soul to which you may bring every action — or course of action — and be certified of its moral character. You have an inherent ability to find out, in any given case, what is right for you and what is wrong for you. When you do that which God approves, and when you do that which He condemns, you may know how He views your conduct, not only afterwards, but beforehand and in the mean time.

It is not necessary for me to show here that right and wrong are qualities actually residing in human conduct. You are aware that some men have denied the existence of such a thing as moral character in actions. They say that one act appears good and another bad to us from mere custom or education, and not because the two acts are morally different. When we make such distinctions as righteous and wicked, holy and sinful, virtuous and vicious, well-deserving and ill-deserving, we are only expressing certain groundless fancies, — there are no realities corresponding to such ideas. Thus they endeavor to take from us the feeling of responsibility, to make it appear that our best deeds are only a selfish prudence, that the idea of guilt or repentance for any act we

commit is a mere spectre, and that our highest wisdom consists, not in troubling ourselves about right and wrong, but in doing that which shall afford us the most pleasure. I need not say that these men are philosophers. No other class of persons have ever reasoned themselves so far away from what is evidently true, — being self-evident, — and from that which every sound mind instinctively believes. We are not cheating ourselves with empty imaginations when we say that some deeds are morally good and others morally evil, — when our thoughts accuse or else excuse one another. That law which the finger of God has written on our hearts, and which abides with us while we have not the law written on tables of stone, — this law is not concerned with the prejudices of custom and the creations of a feverish brain, but the actions which it approves or condemns have a real desert abiding in them, and he who performs them is not an object of indifference, but of righteous judgment, in the sight of God.

I propose now to consider some of the offices of conscience, — some of the workings of this inward guide which we have in questions of moral obligation. And in doing this I shall not aim to communicate any new truths, but shall hope rather to reproduce and brighten certain facts of your personal experience.

(1) The first office of Conscience, which we will consider, may be called the perceptive office.

When you have been reading works of biography and history, running over some fictitious narrative, or witnessing a scenic performance, various personages have been introduced to your notice. You have been brought face to face with the unjust judge, the Christian patriot, the slippery politician, the benevolent

ruler, the treacherous friend, the unnatural child, the devoted mother, the kind neighbor. Crowded together upon the same canvas, and in the utmost disorder, you have seen strutting vanity, sweet forgiveness, meek-visaged piety, manly self-reliance, the distorted face of passion, sordid appetite, stealthy deceit, malice, benignity, avarice, revenge. As you contemplated these diverse qualities and characters, you perceived two general types, to one or the other of which they could severally be referred. While you were rejoicing in the success of one, admiring the splendid abilities of another, pitying the imbecility of another, and despising the meanness of another, you also perceived a single line dividing them all into two parties. You perceived, besides every other diversity, a moral difference: as many of them as were not good were bad, — as many of them as were not virtuous were vicious; as many as were not holy were sinful. There was no third party, nor any neutral party, according to this perception. Many of these characters, which you have met with in your reading and intercourse with men, return to your thoughts now and then; and when you have forgotten every other of their peculiarities, this impression of good or bad still remains. Shylock, Portia, — Gabriel, Lucifer, — Napoleon, Washington, — Paul, Judas, — Elijah, Ahab, — Herod, Simon: though everything else associated with these names may have passed out of memory, we yet have in each case a general impression of good or ill desert.

And as in the case of an entire character or life, so of any single act. Let a man do what he will in your presence, there is an instant voice within you which says, "That act was right," or else, "That act was wrong." The judgment pronounced may be

erroneous, and you may reverse it afterwards; it may be spoken in so low a tone, and you may be so busy with other things, as hardly to have any consciousness of it: but it is there in every instance, as you will soon be convinced by a little watching of your mind's processes.

So, also, when the question has reference to your own line of conduct and is immediate and practical. In such a case you perceive which is the praiseworthy and which the blameworthy course before you on the very instant, and with hardly the possibility of mistake. Let it be a mercantile transaction. "Shall I venture upon this matter?" is the question for you to decide. Many particulars enter into the inquiry: "Will it be lucrative? have I enough knowledge of business to carry it through? what would be its effect on my social standing? would it endanger my health? can I attend to it without being separated from my family and friends?" These are items over which you may be obliged to brood long and earnestly; respecting some of them you may not be able to come to any conclusion; you must run some risk, acting on probabilities, and leaving it for the result to show whether you decided prudently or not. But there is another question involved, about which you have no such hesitation. "Does this, which I am purposing to do, arise out of a good or bad motive? Does it, in its spirit and purpose, conform to the law of moral rectitude, or does it violate that law?" You have no need to deliberate over this. There is a voice within you which speaks instantly and with all authority: it asks no more light, no more evidence. It discerns the moral character of your intention intuitively, and its sentence of approval or condemnation is final.

You know, beyond the shadow of doubt, whether your undertaking is right or wrong, whether the motive from which it springs is just or unjust. You have heard men pretend to be in doubt as to the moral propriety of certain business practices; but how can such doubting be indeed honest? Is it possible that one should not know the character of his own motives? Though we may not be able to judge for another man, yet we can, I believe, each man for himself. Where one begins to talk of being in the dark as to the moral character of his practices, it is a pretty sure sign that he knows them to be wrong, and that for some selfish reason he wishes to be blinded to their ill-desert. It is a willful ignorance, a confusion of ideas which he has labored hard to produce; he has sought to throw a web of sophistries over his soul's eye, and to misunderstand the still small voice. Many a one has amassed wealth by what we charitably call doubtful methods; and at length, after having gained his objects, he pretends that this question of right and wrong all at once occurs to him. And then, consulting some distinguished moralist or divine, and getting great credit for conscientiousness, he concludes to adopt a different course; and yet the truth is, that he knew first, just as really as last, the character of his conduct, — only he then had a selfish object to gain. Do not carry these difficulties to your friends. They cannot settle them for you. You are a law unto yourself respecting them. After all your going about, and taking advice, and asking how others do, you learn only that which your own mind had suggested to you long before.

Now this intuitive perception of the right and the wrong, when we are about to take any step, is what

we call an act of conscience. In every question of morals we have here a judge which pronounces sentence on the instant, which decides infallibly when allowed to act freely, and to which we are many times driven back from every other helper. As it is our first and best resort, so it is our last resort. We return to it, as persons cured of blindness shut their eyes and rely on the old sense of touch to guide them through a forest; we are like the benighted traveler, who, despairing of the way homeward, drops the rein upon his horse's neck; like the man of quick nerves, whom the face of the sky and the barometer often mislead, but whose ebb or flow of animal spirits never fails to indicate when calms and tempests are coming.

(2) A second office of Conscience, which comes next in order, may be called the impulsive.

We have just considered one mental phenomenon: we have seen how the mind acts in view of two or more possible lines of conduct; it decides intuitively which one of them all is right, — which courses you ought to avoid, and which course you may justly pursue. But when this sentence has been given, there is immediately another forth-putting, — another manifestation of mental energy. We are conscious of an impulse arising within us, — an impulse toward that which is right, and away from that which has been pronounced wrong. The voice within us does not stop with saying, "This is the way," but it forthwith adds, "Walk ye in it." This monitor does everything it can do — and not impair our freedom — to help us into the paths of righteousness. When it has counseled us, it gently urges us to follow that counsel. There are other motives, inclining us in other directions, and these often win the day against conscience; but we

never act contrary to her suggestions without a struggle. Go back into your experience a little, if you doubt the truth of this. When you saw those several courses of action before you, and entered on one which you knew to be wrong, did you feel no impulse toward the course which you knew was right? When you deceived that man, or avoided that obligation, or magnified that injurious report about your neighbor, or indulged that appetite, how was it with you? Did you not struggle against something which was prompting you to do otherwise? Did not thoughts of your early home, of your father, of your mother, of brothers and sisters, and of your old pastor and Sabbath-school teacher, rally to the support of this inward motive? Were you not obliged to smother all such memories, and to forget the daylight and the faces of your friends, before you could put down the impulse to good, and in spite of it take the evil path?

When a man first enters upon the road of iniquity, there is a fence for him to get over. Satan may have built a stile there to facilitate his ruin, and he may behold tempting sights, and fair hands may be reached forth to help him; but after all it is a by-path which he enters. He has to make some effort to reach it, though he may find it easy enough afterwards. Conscience not only shows us the wrong way, but she barricades it, and forewarns us to keep out of it.

Nor is this all; for we at the same time see the right way, and that conscience leaves open, and gives us an impulse toward it. Some persons try to satisfy themselves with a negative goodness; that is, they sit still where these two roads meet, entering neither. But you will perceive at once that this does not meet the demands of conscience. She requires something

positive from us. To perceive our duty is one thing, and not to run away from it is another ; and when we have done both these, we may not have yielded to the impulse of conscience to perform that duty. Until you are actually in the way of the right, — putting forth positive acts of justice, truth and love, — there is no more righteousness in you than there is in blocks and stones and the eternal hills. They never do any wrong ; no sin of commission is ever laid to their charge. They are as guiltless as the angels of God ; and you will be as destitute of merit as they, till you begin indeed to run in the way of holiness.

Oh what a friend you have in that bosom monitor ! You may be perplexed and bewildered while passion rages, — while you consult the rules of expediency, — while you make self-interest your adviser. But when you drive away these, and sit down tranquilly to ask only what is right in the case, you never fail ; and then a wall rises up to shut out sin, and the path you ought to enter is open and smooth, and you feel, as it were, a hand laid on you, gently impelling you to take the first happy step. As often as you have stood on the narrow isthmus where you have seen the two oceans of right and wrong spread out, — one on either hand, — you have seen a boat coming up from the right, into which you have involuntarily stepped ; and a soft impulse has then started you off from the shore. If, notwithstanding this, you have chosen evil at last, it is because you have rowed back to the land, and crossed over to the other sea, contrary to the sweet persuasions of the friend in your soul. Conscience does all that it can do to save you from sin. Like some mother hunting for a lost child, it not only calls to you from its far-off home, but comes out after you

into the wilderness, marking the trees all along for your guidance; and it arouses you from your stupor, and lifts you up, and advances your feet into the homeward way. It is not content with stretching a thread through the windings of the labyrinth in which you wander, but it puts that thread into your hand and winds it about you, and gently draws you on; so that you are guilty of positive resistance if you do not find your way out into the air and sunlight.

(3) Conscience has one other office, namely, the retributive.

This third act is not linked immediately to the second, as we saw that the second was to the first. As soon as we have the perception of the right, we feel the impulse toward it; but between this impulse and the retributive work, an act of freewill comes in. Thus far, the process has been involuntary; it has gone on of itself without our help, and in spite of hindrances. But here it pauses to see how we will choose; after we have decided which course to take, and are actually pursuing our chosen way, then the final work of conscience begins.

This retribution may be in the form either of a reward or of a punishment. Recall some moment in your history — if you can — when you implicitly obeyed conscience. Perhaps you had just come from a Christian home to the city, — a young man in quest of your fortune. While unpacking your trunk you came across the little Bible, — and the note asking you, for the sake of a mother's love, to read the volume each day prayerfully. You did not feel the magnitude of the question at first, perhaps; and carelessly laid the holy book aside, or read it now and then in an indifferent manner. But gradually temptations

rose around you, and you saw that a struggle must come. "Shall I waste my Sabbaths, go with vicious companions, and form evil habits, or shall I be true to my early instructions?" This was the alternative; and, turning the deaf ear to pleasure, you listened to the voice of duty. You took a seat in the house of God, you joined the Bible-class, you sought the friendship of the good. Now what was the result of that choice? Why, a feeling of self-respect rose at once within you. You were at peace with yourself, — calm and happy in soul. You did not fear to look any man in the face; frowns could not abash you, disappointments could not drive you to desperation. If you have steadily pursued this course, — shunning the evil and choosing the good, — your reward has been constant and increasing. No crimes, no dissipations, no dishonesties lift up their black fronts as you gaze into the past: everything is bright, fair, and of good report; and therefore the retributive work of conscience is an unspeakable delight to you. You have a blessedness which no external success could give, and which no worldly trouble can ever disturb. All things in nature and providence smile upon you. They say, "He is innocent; let him pass unscathed; protect him from harm; God loves him, and bids us strew flowers in his path."

But suppose that you chose the other side of the alternative, — that you resisted the impulse of conscience, and chose the evil way. Then the retribution was not pleasant, but terrible to you. The very first step you took, a viper stung you; your choice rebounded with a painful blow; no sooner had you opened the gate than the flames of punishment burst forth upon you. If you forgot the counsels of Chris-

tian parents ; if you broke from the restraints of your early home ; if you turned away your foot from the sanctuary ; if you have indulged appetite ; if you have followed passion, and yielded to temptations ; if you have wronged your fellow-man, or been a defamer or a busybody, — you have suffered more or less all the while. It has been a perpetual dropping, a lingering torture, a wave of discomfort which may have ebbed at times, but which has never rested. Your worldly successes have perhaps elated you for a brief period ; but your joy was like the crackling of thorns, which flame a moment and then turn to ashes. Some great honor or victory has lit up the troubled waters for a day ; but they have still been troubled, and have cast forth mire and dirt. You have had a little of that feeling which oppressed Cain's heart when he went out from the Lord's presence with a mark upon him. You carry a restless, untamed secret within you. It is closely caged, but you constantly tremble lest it should slip the bolt, or find an unfastened window and fly out before the whole community. This is your retribution ; this is the final work of conscience in the wrong-doer's heart. It may vary in intensity under different circumstances and at different periods of life, but it is inevitable. Can you prove that it will not be cumulative and eternal ?

O sinner, Conscience is the sworn enemy of your happiness ! She is the Nemesis of the ancients, dogging the footsteps of the criminal, and ever brandishing her sword and scorpion-whip above him. She tells his secret to the stars, to the winds, to the birds, to the flowers. There is nothing in all the earth, nor in heaven above, nor in the depths beneath, which she does not press into her service. The planets in their

courses fight with her against the fleeing transgressor. The sun and moon stand still that she may complete his overthrow. The silence and the darkness and the moan of the ocean terrify him. The voice of blood crieth out from the ground. "I am a sinner," is the inward conviction; and the mountains echo it; the sunbeams paint it; the very leaves whisper back the voice, "Thou art a sinner." "Guilty" is the word; and it is taken up and passed round the universe till everything learns it; and you seem at length to be suspended at the centre of a vast sphere, hollow to its surface, and all over that surrounding concave you see eyes flashing with indignation, and hear millions of voices from all points, hissing the fearful word "guilty."

We have now analyzed that process which takes place in man as often as any question of duty comes before him. Our mental history has been spread out around us like a broad sea, and we have looked forth on the surface, witnessing the calms and tide-currents, the lights and shadows and storms, which play over it.

This looking into our experience has shown us, that in all questions involving the idea of right and wrong, we do at once perceive on which side each of these two moral qualities lies; that immediately after this perception we feel an impulse, equivalent to a command, urging us to pursue the right and avoid the wrong; and that we are rewarded with peace of mind, or punished with remorse, according as we obey or disobey that mandatory voice. If we choose the right, our retribution is blessed; but if we choose the wrong, our retribution is terrible.

We have seen enough to feel the force of the

apostle's words. Let this truth take up its abode in your thoughts, my hearer, the fact that you are a law unto yourself. When you flee from the Bible, from the sanctuary, from all places of Christian influence, you do not get away from this tribunal in your soul. "The mind is its own place, and can make a heaven of hell, a hell of heaven." In the midst of your banquetings and revelries, a hand often comes out, and on the wall over against you writes your condemnation in letters of fire. You go forth from the presence of God and His people; but the mark set on you seems to be burning into the living flesh, and everywhere betraying you. When the rush of excitement is over, honest reflection ensues; and you throw down the thirty pieces of silver, and sigh for annihilation. You walk in your pleasure-bower in the cool of the day; but suddenly a voice saith, "Where art thou, sinner;" and you are afraid, and hide yourself. It is in vain that you silence all the tongues of reproof; for when you have created this silence, the rebukes of the inward monitor become only the more articulate and audible. Your very heart-throbs are startling to you. Your sin rises up out of its bloody grave, and steals along after you, whispering its ghostly threats just over your shoulder.

There is no peace for you till the decisions of this inward tribunal have been turned in your favor. Some power must be applied to your conscience which shall cleanse it from these death-dealing remembrances. If there be any Saviour to whom you may transfer your sins, and any Holy Spirit who is able to renew your heart, they are your only hope; they are the city of refuge into which you may run and be safe from the avenger.

THE BEGINNING AND END OF SIN.

But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then, when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin; and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death. — JAMES i. 14, 15.

MUCH has of late been said about the punishment of sin. It is to be hoped that our anxiety about the punishment will not lead us to overlook the sin. The consequences of sin, however dreadful they may be, are not so much to be dreaded as sin itself. If we could but take care of the causes, the effects would take care of themselves. I am sure, dear friends, that if we had any true sense of what sin is at the present moment doing in our world, any picture of a retribution to come would seem comparatively tame to us.

The word "sin" is a religious word; a word, that is, which belongs rather to our religious than to our secular phraseology. It suggests the idea of divine rather than human obligation. Sin is transgression of the law of God, or want of conformity thereto. We may consider all wrong-doing as of three special kinds, according to the three chief relations in which every person stands. A man is related first to himself, and his wrong-doing in this relation is commonly known as his vice. But secondly a man is related to his fellow-men, and his wrong-doing in this relation is his crime. Again, every man is related to God, and in this relation his wrong-doing is his sin. Vice,

crime, sin, — these are the three ideas, each distinct and standing by itself in our thought, though they run into one another more or less in practice. We can conceive of a man as very vicious in life without being criminal; that is, he breaks no positive law of the state. Or a man may be a great criminal, that is, a high-handed violator of public law, while he is unobjectionable in his private life. Jefferson Davis taught a Bible class during the war of the Rebellion, and was in church when he heard of the surrender of Lee. But though there may be crime without vice, and vice without crime, yet neither of these can exist without sin. The divine relation goes around those which are human. It includes them, and goes out far beyond them. If one is vicious, he sins, and if one is criminal, he sins; yet one may sin who is neither vicious nor criminal. It is as though there were three circles having a common centre. The largest of the three includes the other two, and also has a belt of space which is outside of them both. Paint the inner circles white or black, and the outer circle is affected to that extent; yet if you paint only the belt which lies around them in the great circle, they are untouched. Thus it is that you cannot have either vice or crime without having sin; yet there may be a broad belt of sin running around the soul between its orbit and God, where there is no vice nor crime. The lower relations to ourselves and our fellow-men do not include the higher, but the higher include the lower. All our wrong-doing is therefore sinful, and hence sin is the one comprehensive idea which includes all moral evil. Do away with sin, and you not only do away with vice and crime, but you fill out the whole vast circle of duty and right from centre to circumference.

Every interest of man and of this temporal life is secured to the extent that God is obeyed. Sin is therefore the heart and centre of every form of wickedness or corruption which confronts us in the world. To explain the origin of this is to account for the existence of all moral evil; to do what we can for the removal of sin from among men, is to do what we can for the final reign of righteousness in the earth.

The existence of sin is a mystery which cannot be satisfactorily accounted for; yet the following things we may affirm out of the Bible and on grounds of reason: —

1. First, that God made sin possible. He made it possible by creating man. If He had stopped in the work of creation before coming to man, He might have had a world here in which there would have been no sin. There would have been birds of the air and creeping things and fishes in the sea, but no sin. The sun might have risen and set upon glorious continents, covered with vast forests full of animal life, but in all his circuit he would not have looked on sin. The rank vegetation of the tropics may exhale poisonous odors, but it cannot sin. The monsters of the deep can make war on each other, and lions growl and fight, but they cannot sin. All these are without conscience, without spiritual nature, without that immediate relation to God which makes sin possible. This all came to pass only when God said, "Let us make man." What a moment that was in God's creative work! He foresaw all the sin which would flow out from man over his new world. Yet He did not hesitate. There is no break in the process. Not only does He make man in His own image, but He declares that He made all other creatures for the sake of man.

He puts man over them all as their appointed lord, crowns him with glory and honor on that throne of dominion, and there ceases from His work as though His creative power had reached its climax in man. He called His other works good, but man He called very good; and the morning stars sang together, and the sons of God shouted for joy over his work thus completed and crowned. Dear friends, why all this joy over the creation of man, with whom came the possibility of sin? Ah, it is because that with the possibility of sin came the possibility of holiness! Whether this answer to the question satisfies us or not, it is all that either reason or Scripture gives. He alone can do right who has power to do wrong. You cannot have any moral character if you are not free. Only those who can be bad are able to be good. A well-deserving life springs out of the same independent manhood in virtue of which one may make his life ill-deserving. You could not live worthily if you were not able to live unworthily before men and God. In order that God might have a creature in His universe who could be holy, He must make one who could be sinful. The lower orders of life were not made in His image. They are not His children as man is. We do not read that He breathed His own breath into them, and they became living souls. If they could not sin, neither could they be holy. Their life is not free, but is regulated by natural laws. If they are without blame when they kill their prey, so are they without merit when they feed and guard their young. They have no moral nature. Sin and holiness are alike impossible to them. But with man, in whom is the possibility of sin, the capacity for holiness also comes. If God looked forward through

human history, and saw all the Pharaohs and Jero-boams and Neros who would arise out of that free-will with which He endowed man, He also saw the Enochs and Samuels and Johns and Pauls. Nay, He saw that bright consummate flower of our race, and of all history, Jesus of Nazareth. That He might be brought forth into the world, and dwell among men full of grace and truth, there is no possibility of evil for which we should not gladly make way. Though our souls are full of pain at what we see of the do-ings of sin in the earth, yet we thank God for it when we learn that it could not be but for that image of God in men which has given us the one true and great Light of the world. You send your son to college; but his education will only make him stronger to do evil, if he is not inclined to do good. Yet you send him, and wisely send him, notwithstanding the hazard. Or you endow your child with your worldly wealth, as the father in the parable did his two sons. You do this, and what you do must be judged by itself, though you make it possible for your child to be a prodigal. The illustration is not perfect, I know, since God can foresee as we cannot; yet it touches at one point. There are certain things which you are in fatherly kindness bound to do for your son, though you may foresee that he will abuse the love, and not be made better by it but worse. God must have foreseen all the evil as well as all the good when He made man, yet He did not let the evil become possible for the sake of the good. He foresaw how He could overrule sin, how He could redeem men from it, how it would give Him occasion to manifest His justice and His grace. Still the question "why?" is not fully answered. It may be some time. The nearest

we can now come to an answer is that it was not fitting that God should be the only free being in the universe, though with the creation of finite beings who were free came the possibility of sin.

2. God made sin possible ; but, secondly, man has made sin actual. This we all admit, for it is what we all see. We have taken the godlike freedom with which we were dowered at our birth that we might be holy as God is holy, and in the use of it have made ourselves opposite to him. The same high liberty which in him works out righteousness and truth, works out sin in us. There is no escaping this point. Our consciences hold us to it. The terrible severity with which we denounce the wickedness of which the earth is full, holds us to it. Amid all the forms of good which look out on us from among the monuments of our race, we are forced to see that every page of human history is more or less blotted with human sins. We see them, and we lay them at the door of the persons who committed them. If they were free, they were responsible, and that is enough ; we do not look behind them to find something else on which to charge their guilt. If any theory of fate in theology, or any form of science evolving mind and spirit out of natural forces, comes along, that which is best and most authoritative in us rejects it. Our conscience and soul know better. We will not have our own remorse salved over in that way. We will not have the monsters of wickedness among men made irresponsible in any such way. Sin is due to man, not to something above or behind him. It cannot be traced to his circumstances. So far as it is sin, it begins in his own free will ; thence it proceeds and comes forth, and defiles the man. His lusts, that is, his natural

desires or propensities, may be a matter of inheritance ; but not till these have yielded themselves as Eve yielded in Eden, do they, in the words of our text, bring forth sin. The sin begins wholly in the man himself, that sin which when it is finished bringeth forth death. Whenever any act of wrong-doing has been clearly traced to any man's door, and he is found to be one endowed with the common faculties of men, it is idle for him to try to shirk his fault. We do not let him off ; nor does his own conscience, nor human law. Adam tried to lay off his sin on Eve, and she hers on the serpent ; but God held them each to their own doing. They knew the sin was theirs, or they would not have been ashamed and fled out of the garden. However deceptive our thoughts may be on many subjects, yet on this one subject they are thoroughly trustworthy, dear friends. We know that our sins are our own. Whatever may have been our wrong-doing toward God, or men, or ourselves, it belongs to us and not to some other person or thing. We do not thank anybody for trying to apologize for us. If we are honest, we do not attempt to shirk. The fact of our guilt flames up within us, and our cry is for that which shall quench the flame. We take to ourselves the words of David in the 51st Psalm. Our conscience laughs a horrid laugh at the man who would heal our hurt lightly, or would persuade us that it is not our hurt, but due to something else. That which shall create a clean heart in us, and renew within us a right spirit, is the only ministry which can give us true relief. And to this strong cry of our souls that all sin begins in man, the Bible gives its loud Amen. Dear friends, did you ever hear a man madly say that we shall soon get rid of our Bibles ?

We never shall till we get rid of ourselves. The voices of our own hearts are re-echoed from between its lids. On a great many points, and especially on this subject of sin, it speaks back to us what our consciences affirm. It tells us that man alone is responsible for the existence of sin in all its smallest or mightiest and most terrible forms. "When a righteous man turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and dieth in them, for his iniquity that he hath done shall he die. Again, when the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness that he hath committed, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive." The iniquities of the fathers shall not be on the children, nor of the children on the fathers; the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him. So fearful a thing is it, dear friends, to be made in the image of God, to be heirs and possessors of the divine faculty of free-will, to have it left to us to say whether we will go upward or downward in our desires, whether we will be centres of good or of evil in the world, whether we will pour the light of love or the gloom and disorder of selfishness about us on our way through life.

3. God made sin possible, man has made it actual; and the next question is, Does habit make sin perpetual? Here we must answer the inquiry as to the continuance of the punishment of sin. The punishment will be perpetual if the sin is perpetual. Whether this is a doctrine of any special theology, or of the Bible even, we need not now stop to ask. It is a doctrine of every human conscience. You all admit, nay you stoutly insist, that a man will be punished with remorse as long as he sins; and you also insist that no

right-minded person can look on the wrong-doer but with displeasure. But these are the two elements of the punishment of sin. The "worm" of Scripture is the evil-doer's own remorse, and the "fire" of Scripture is the displeasure which God and all holy beings feel toward him. Will the worm ever die? or will the fire ever be quenched? Yes, we most confidently and gladly answer; they will both come to an end, if the habit of sinning ever comes to an end. Do away with the cause and you will no longer have the effect. Dry up the fountain of sin, and the bitter waters of punishment for it will cease to flow. But will that fountain be in all cases dried up? May not the habit of sinning become fixed and unchangeable? Your experience and observation teach you something here. You say that "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure." You tremble when you see a young person forming an evil habit, for you know the power of habit. The longer he continues in his evil course, the less hope you have of him. Can you not think of some for whom you have almost ceased to hope, nay, for whom you have no hope whatever left? Here is the question. Let the light of your experience shine upon it, and think it out for yourself. However tenderly you may long for any, and though the way of life is open to every soul, yet you know better than I can tell you, how improbable it is that one to whom sin has become a second nature will ever cease from sinning.

I am anxious to hold your minds to the one fact of sin, dear friends, not letting them wander off to "the wages of sin," in order that you may not mistake the motives which should lead you to seek deliverance from sin. Not the punishment of wrong-doing, but

wrong-doing itself is what you should be afraid of. As holiness, though attended by peace and joy, is nobler than they, so sin is a worse evil than the remorse with which it is ever joined. Holiness is so excellent that we ought to seek it, though it should fill us with pain; wickedness is so base that we ought to shun it, though it were sure to fill us with peace and joy. Our conduct, that is, should be just what our conscience now tells us it ought to be, though its consequences to us should be just the reverse of what we have as yet found them to be. If wrong could open the kingdom of heaven to you, it would be your duty to shun it, as you are bound to do right whatever misery it may seem to you to involve.

What is that death, dear friends, which sin is said to bring forth when it is finished? Do not think of it as some outward king of terrors which rushes suddenly upon you, or as a kind of judicial infliction which an unfeeling sheriff administers. Think of it as something very different from that. It is a dying process going on within you, which, if never arrested but allowed to work itself fully out, will end in spiritual death. That is the death which comes to the sinning soul. Your sins, if persisted in, will at length separate between you and God, so that you shall no more feel the light of His love; they will withdraw you from His presence into outer darkness, where you will be without Him, and without hope in the world. That you should suffer for your sins is not so great an evil as that you should sin; for the suffering may do you good, but the sin mars, distorts, and spoils that in you which is noble and like God. Ah, if you could see the sin as it is, and its steady tendency toward spiritual death in you, you would not need to be told

of any other punishment! You would cast it from you as St. Paul cast the viper which had fastened on his hand into the fire. You would thank God for His warnings to you not to delay repentance, but to seek His face while it is called to-day, lest the fangs of the sinful habit become securely fastened in you, and its deadly poison extended to the very sources of your life. I need not tell you that sin, when thus finished, brings forth death. You have eyes as well as I. You see, and you reason from what you see; and creed or no creed, you are perfectly certain that sinful habits may be persisted in till all true spiritual life shall be destroyed.

But the Bible speaks to us, dear friends, as though that life in us were already extinct. It says that the death which sin produces has come upon the world; not that we shall die in trespasses and sins, but that we are dead in them. This, however, is not the final death, not the death from which there is no resurrection. It is a kind of suspended animation in which our spirits now are. We are not twice dead, not plucked up by the roots. Some of us may have more spiritual life than others, but we all have enough to believe in Jesus Christ. He is our resurrection and our life. He will raise us up. He came that we might have life, and that we might have it more abundantly. However much sin may have benumbed your soul, you to-day have life enough in you to take hold on Him who is the bringer of life to you from God; but if you delay that act of faith till the work of sin is finished up in you, what prospect have you that you will perform it, whether in this world or the next, or though there were a thousand worlds to come? Our great and blessed hope, full of immortality, is

that Jesus Christ has come into this world to save us ; and without trying to draw aside the solemn veil of the future, let our knowledge of what sin itself is, and of the slow death with which it is even now torturing us, keep us from saying to Him, “ Go thy way for this time,” and make us hasten to His feet to say, “ My Lord and my God.”

THE VALLEY OF VISION.

Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live. — EZEK. xxxvii. 9.

WHO are the slain? Wherein are they slain? What has slain them? Why are they a mournful sight? What glad fact does the vision of them take for granted? And how can they be made to live? These are some of the questions which the text leads us to ask, and to which the word of God gives us explicit answers.

1. In regard to the first question, Who are the slain? it is clear (1) that they are not those faithful servants of God whom He has taken to Himself. For they never die. They live on, though slain with the sword. The God of Abraham is not a God of the dead, but of the living; all live unto Him. "Whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die," said Christ at the grave of Lazarus. Those devoted Christians of every age and country, who have passed into the life beyond life, are most effectually doing God's work where they now are. We ought not to wish them back again in the flesh. We do not think of a valley of dry bones, like that which the prophet saw in vision, when we recall their names. Are they not all ministering spirits? They are the cloud of witnesses by which we are compassed about. They inspire us with their presence, and their works do follow them in the earth. There is no occasion to call for

any divine breath to come and breathe on them and make them live; for they were never more alive, or more active in promoting the glory of God, than now, wherever they may be in His dominions. (2) Nor can the slain to whom this question points us be those whom Christ has never yet made alive. Undoubtedly the dead in soul, those who are dead toward God, are meant; but not those who have never yet believed. Only that which is alive can be slain; and the Bible nowhere represents unconverted men as alive, but as spiritually dead. Adam was slain in soul, and died unto God, in the day when he forsook God. But all his posterity, St. Paul argues, became dead in him. "As in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive." "You hath He quickened," says the same apostle in another place, "who were dead in trespasses and sins." They had never been alive. They were born with their spirits dead toward God. They had never communed with God, or even known Him, though He was their Father, till Christ quickened them. There is sore need that the breath should come from the four winds and breathe on these spirits which have never yet lived; but they are not the slain over whom the yearning cry in our text is lifted up. (3) The slain here, dear friends, are those whom the Spirit once made alive to God, but who have fallen away from Him under the power of the world. Backsliders, worldly-minded Christians, those who neglect their religious duties, and break the vows of God which are upon them, church-members who are living the lives of unbelievers, — they are the slain for whom this prayer, "Come, O breath," is offered. The breath of life, which is God's indwelling spirit, has gone out of them; and the call to that spirit is to

come back into them. The prophet Ezekiel thought of the members of the church of God in His day. They were gone into the power of their enemies. They were scattered among the nations. They had forgotten the Lord that bought them, and were bowing down to idols. Only a small remnant of faithful ones survived to bewail the apostasy of the many. Is it not strikingly so now? How small the proportion of Christ's nominal followers, even here among us, who are earnestly laboring with Him! Is not our own church sadly like the scene in the valley of vision? A few, thank God, have not been slain by the worldliness about them. But are they not almost all scattered? Are they not inconstant and weak in their devotion to Christ, or utterly indifferent to Him? Of the ten lepers whom Christ cleansed, but one returned to give glory to God. "Where are the nine?" is the question which we are all the time constrained to ask, when we see how few are eager to be at the place of prayer, and to give themselves to the sadly neglected work of the church. "Slain, slain, slain!" is the exclamation which rushes to our lips as we think of the scores upon scores of nominal Christians right about us, who are mouldering away in their worldliness, undisturbed by the appeal which goes forth to them, to come up with us to the help of the Lord against the mighty.

2. But wherein lies the appropriateness of this image? In what respect are idle professors of religion "slain"? They have fallen, and their spiritual life has gone out of them, though not beyond the power of God to send it back into them. The word "slain" is taken from the vocabulary of war. It suggests a battlefield, where armed hosts are mar-

shalled in deadly strife. We look over the ground where Christ, the Captain of His people, has been leading them against their enemies. Those enemies have proved too mighty for them. They were not clad with the whole armor of God. They did not take the weapons which are mighty to the pulling-down of strongholds. Instead of conquering their enemies, they have fallen down before them. They have let themselves be slain, as with the sword, by their jealousy and ambition and pride, by their strifes and suspicions among themselves, by their love of ease, by their devotion to pleasure and to gain, by their weariness in well-doing, by their dread of inconvenience and hardship for Christ's sake. As soldiers of Christ they are slain by these enemies, and their bones lie bleaching in the valley. They are dead in spirit, killed in soul; of no more use to the Captain of our salvation in fighting his battles against sin than the hosts which sleep on the field of a Waterloo or Gettysburg are for the purposes of carnal strife. They are dead soldiers of the Lord; buried, — nay, unburied, for we cannot hide from our eyes the ghastly spectacle which they make while they lie together on the field where the world, the flesh, and the devil clove them down.

3. If we should go on and attempt to gain a full knowledge of each foe concerned in this slaying of God's people, there would be an endless task before us. It may be said of them, as of the evil spirits that went out of the man in the gospel, that their name is legion. Chief among them is unbelief, that easily besetting sin, which in all its forms is an adder in our path, a hungry lion which croucheth at our door. If we could keep ourselves from trusting in

anything but Christ; if we were all the time conscious of being given up to Him, and of glorying in nothing save His cross; if we could have that faith in the progress and final triumph of His kingdom which is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen, — we should at once get the victory over ten thousand foes to our spiritual life. These foes I cannot enumerate. They are as manifold and various as the daily fortunes and changes of our lives. Sometimes they come in battalions; sometimes perhaps, though rarely, alone. They may be outward, or may make the assault within our hearts. They are anything which separates between us and our God; anything which dims the vision of eternal things, and of the destiny of souls out of Christ; anything which keeps us from consecrating ourselves to the Lord's service, or which tempts us to grow remiss in our duty to Him. These are the destroying angel which flies over our dwellings, leaving death in every house where the blood of the paschal lamb is not found. These are the giants and the Anakim, before which we fall down slain the moment our faith in God wavers. These are the Philistines who oppress us and put out our eyes; the Syrians and the Assyrians who make war upon us; the Benhadads and Nebuchadnezzars who carry us away into captivity. If any are weak among us, or any sleep; if we seem to sit in the midst of the slain, and no army gathers at the sound of the trumpet to march with us against the hosts of sin, it is because God's people have fallen back from their great Leader, and have allowed a bewitching but deceitful world to get the dominion over them.

4. And now, ceasing to ask who slew all these, let us turn to the scene itself, — this great multitude of

church-members who have a name to live, but are dead. Is it not a sight too mournful for any words to describe? A spiritual graveyard; a battlefield from which the victorious enemies of truth have marched away, and left the slain friends of God lying about in mouldering heaps. We beautify our cemeteries where men's bodies are buried. There the good, the young, the venerable, the gentle-hearted softly lie, and sweetly sleep, low in the ground. Even on great fields of battle, the grim aspect of death soon passes away, and the grass and flowers overgrow the graves of the dead. It does not affright or distress us to visit such spots. They are hallowed by great memories. They charm us with their quiet dells, their shady walks, their silent recesses. We are reluctant to quit them; for they fill us with tender visions, with calm thoughts, with noble resolves. But how different the spiritual cemetery on which God to-day looks in His backslidden and worldly church! No beauty here, but a ghastly spectacle, at which the very soul in us should creep! This scene, in which our God walks, is not the Eden of old which He made and fenced about; it is a Golgotha,—a place of skulls and bleaching bones. Oh how we should envy the buried dead, who sleep in Christ, when we contrast their blessed peace with the wretched state of the dead in soul, slain by their love of the world, whose unburied forms moulder before our eyes! Slain in spirit, killed at their souls' centre, their love of Christ withered and dead, the hopes of heaven which once flourished in their hearts now a whitened and crumbling heap. Aside from this mournfulness of the spectacle in itself, consider (1) What a hindrance it is to the word of truth. I do not here offer any de-

fense of those who point to backsliders in the church as their reason for continuing in the world. Christ has come and spoken unto all men, and if any will not hear His words, they have no cloak for their sin. We may always find some who show by their lives that Christ has saving power. When men are in search of excuses, they will find them somewhere. Even Christ Himself was a stumbling-block to the Jews. In our own hearts is the place where we are to look, if we would know why we should come after Christ. But while the sins of church-members are no excuse for the worldling, his responsibility is no excuse for them. And though they alike stand or fall to the same Master, it is the duty of Christ's own people to honor Him before men. They are the light of the world. They are the salt of the earth. The world should not make them its Bible, but it does. If they fall away from Christ, slight His service, and become spiritually dead, other men are slow to begin the new life. They fear a similar result in their own case. Hence the word of truth is hindered and made weak. The salt, so far from saving anything, has lost its savor, and is itself trodden under foot of men. (2) And not only do lapsed and worldly Christians hinder the truth. Consider how great good they might accomplish if all were earnestly at work for Christ. A dead army discourages its friends, and makes its enemies feel strong. But if there be a noise, and a shaking, and the bones come together, bone to his bone, and the sinews and the flesh come upon them, and they are covered with the skin above, and the breath breathes upon them, then they stand up on their feet, an exceeding great army. Their awakening out of death, and rising up as one host in battle

order, revives the fainting heart of the prophet. He no longer mourns, but is full of joy. He feels strong and safe, and is sure of victory. If all the people in this city, who profess to love our Lord Jesus Christ, were united as one man, and wholly alive in witnessing for Him and pressing His claims on the ungodly, worldliness and unbelief here would soon be things of the past. If all nominal Christians throughout the world were thus united and devoted, we should soon hear the cry, "The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdom of our Lord." No wonder, then, that the valley of vision is a valley of the shadow of death to earnest Christians. Nothing else so tries their faith. Nothing else so weakens their hands. Nothing else so turns the truth into a lie. Nothing else so holds them back from the conquest of sin and unbelief.

5. But, dear friends, it is not all death, not all gloom. There is one glad fact which even the lament in our text takes for granted. The prophet was yet alive, and God had not forgotten to be gracious. There is hope for Zion, great hope, so long as there is a remnant who cry unto God for her, and who will not hold their peace till He makes her a praise. The captives hanging their harps on the willows, refusing to sing songs, sitting down by the rivers of Babylon in their tears, are indeed a mournful sight. But God will have regard to such love for His church. The devotion of the faithful few, weeping over the desolations of Zion when they remember her, is precious in His sight. There was hope for Israel even in the time of Ahab, because of the seven thousand who had not bowed the knee to Baal. Ezra and Nehemiah, full of faith and holy purpose amid the ruins of Jerusalem, are a pledge that its temple and walls shall be

rebuilt. There was hope that the bondmen would go out of Egypt, when Moses arose to pity their wrongs. The captivity should surely return into their own land, out of all the countries into which they had been driven; for Daniel was praying, and Ezekiel and Isaiah prophesying, and in every place a chosen few were crying unto God to remember His covenant. The soldiers of Christ will live again, though the world has slain them, wherever there are enough earnest souls to compass the altar, and cry unto God for the sacred fire to fall from heaven. A hundred and twenty thus praying brought the first great revival in the Christian church. God would have spared Sodom if there had been ten righteous men in it. Solomon tells us of a poor man, so obscure that no one remembered him, who saved a city. How many times Israel provoked God, yet for His servant David's sake He would not destroy the wicked nation. It is a sad sight which the prophet beholds, sitting in the valley full of dry bones; yet the prophet himself, beseeching the breath to come from the four winds, relieves the scene. We have hope even for the dead, while we look on him and listen to his earnest cry. So at the present time, though God's people have been slain, and are fallen down in multitudes before their enemies, we have hope. Not all are killed. There are those left who love the church, and who bewail its desolations. They show their love, not only by their tears, but by their efforts. They are ready to give their time, to give their money; to go out of their particular churches and join heart and hand with all Christians; to lay aside their special tastes and methods, and to work in such ways as God seems to be now choosing for the gathering in of the lost. Is there not, even in

this, a noise and a shaking? and though God may still further try our faith, yet should not this which we already see be a sign to us that God is ready to let His light shine, and to make His glory rise upon us?

6. If such be the glad quickening which is about to come, what are its instruments? Through what agencies, or by what means, are the multitudes of nominal Christians about us, now dead in worldliness and unbelief, to be revived in soul, and drawn together as one loyal host after the advancing standard of the cross? (1) The first grand instrument is the plain and pointed preaching of God's word. "Prophecy upon these bones, and say unto them, O ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord." Don't hear fables, don't hear theories, don't hear speculations, but hear the word of the Lord. So important was it that the prophet should proclaim God's word and nothing else, that in sending Him to Israel, God said, "All My words that I shall speak unto thee receive in thine heart, and hear with thine ears. And go, get thee unto them of the captivity, unto the children of thy people, and speak unto them, and tell them, Thus saith the Lord God, whether they will hear or forbear." God has never authorized any one to preach anything but His word, in all efforts either for the quickening of backsliders or the gathering in of the unsaved. That word was the two-edged sword put into the hands of the prophets and into the hands of the apostles. Besides their own consecrated lives, nothing was said to them about using any other weapon. And this they were to use at all hazards, when men yielded to it, and when they mocked. Is it possible, dear brethren, that any of us do not see that the word of God is still the most effective weapon we can wield?

Look at the conquests which are being won with it at the present day. The Bible has been called an antiquated book, worn out and outgrown. Its enemies have tried to prove that it contradicts science and history, that it teaches bad morals, that it is inconsistent with itself. They have buried it and burned it; they have held it up to ridicule, and denounced it as the chief enemy of human progress. Yet to-day, in the most enlightened cities of the world, where learning and philosophy have their proudest seats, the Bible is still a two-edged sword. The greatest intellects bow to it as to no other book. It draws whole populations together to be charmed, convinced of sin, comforted, purified, and blessed, as nothing else ever has or ever can. You may call it "foolishness," but it is wiser than men. You may call it "weakness," but it is stronger than men. Oh that we might learn to obey God, and speak nothing but His word wherever we prophesy, in view of the proofs that He owns and crowns such faithfulness, of which all history and the whole world are full! (2) But while the Lord's servant thus prophesied, he also prayed. "Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live." This was the burden of his supplication for the dry bones, after he had spoken God's word unto them. The bones came together, and were covered with the flesh and the skin while he prophesied; but there was no life in them. They lay silent and motionless, still a vast field of the dead, waiting for the mighty breath to come from the four winds. So our proclaiming of God's word to the dead in sin is not enough. We may awaken curiosity, we may stimulate inquiry, we may produce a fair external morality; but there is no breath, no spir-

itual life, no indwelling Christ, no kingdom of God set up in the soul. For that, the great and blessed object of all our striving, we must betake ourselves to prayer. "Come, O breath! Holy Ghost, blessed Comforter, Spirit of all truth, only Regenerator and only Sanctifier, Essence and Life of the Eternal God, thou art all our hope. Come, as thou didst when the place where the disciples were met together was shaken, and breathe upon these slain, and they shall live." That is the prayer which must break from all our hearts, with strong crying and tears, if we would see the dead bodies stand upon their feet, an exceeding great army, ready to follow the Captain of our salvation whithersoever He shall lead them. The Holy Spirit must take of the things of Christ, and show unto them that are dead in sin. The truth which quickens and saves does not enter into the natural man and abide there. He welcomes it, and is made one with Christ by it, only as He has the Spirit of God. Elijah can repair the altar of the Lord, and lay on it the sacrifice; but not till the fire descends from heaven do the people fall on their faces and say, "The Lord, He is the God; the Lord, He is the God." The disciples can roll away the stone from the door of the sepulchre, but not till the voice of eternal love pierces its gloom do the dead come forth.

HOW ONE'S THINKING IS HIMSELF.

For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he. — PROV. xxiii. 7.

MANY lessons of encouragement and of warning may be drawn from these words, some of which you are now invited to consider. Solomon is speaking of the way in which one should conduct himself in the presence of a ruler. He should not presume at all on the ruler's polite treatment of him, for behind that outward courtesy there may be an evil intent. Not as he seems and speaks is the ruler, but as he thinks in his heart. He may use smooth words more to hide than to express his meaning. Do not estimate him by what you see and hear, but wait till you know what the thoughts of his heart toward you are, if you would rightly judge him. Though it is true that his thinking must give color to his behavior, and there is no such thing as successful hypocrisy to the practiced eye, yet the thinking is the man, the behavior is not.

1. The first lesson of the text, then, is that our real manhood or womanhood is independent of everything outward. It is what the tenor of our thoughts is. Though the inward tends to work outward, yet you may be a good man or woman under a forbidding exterior, and you may be a bad man or woman under a fair exterior. You remember Abner and his fate at the hand of Joab. Joab sent him a very polite invitation to come to Hebron, and he came. And there, in

the gate, having taken him aside, and while speaking quietly to him, as if to show him some special courtesy, he "smote him under the fifth rib, that he died." So also did Joab treat Amasa, another rival warrior, of whose influence with the new king David he was jealous. Amasa was deceived by fair words and polite treatment, as Abner had been. The true Joab was not the man who said, "Art thou in health, my brother?" and took him by the beard with the right hand and kissed him, but the man who underneath all this was contriving to slay him. Just the opposite to this in manner often was the behavior of men who were full of a friendly spirit. King Saul had no truer friend than Samuel, yet how terribly Samuel rebuked him! The reproofs of Nathan to David were a true kindness; he found them to be an excellent oil which did not break his head. The destroyers of Ahab were Jezebel and her prophets who so flattered him; it was Elijah, sternly upbraiding him, who yearned to save both him and his kingdom. The poet Shakespeare, in his tragedy of King Lear, has given a vivid picture of what I am now trying to make plain. When the old king wishes to lay aside public cares, and is about to divide up his kingdom among his three daughters, how profuse the two elder in words of strong and undying affection! while the other daughter is so measured in speech as to seem not to care for her father's rich gifts. He is deceived by these different manners. He gives all his goods to the two crafty ones who afterwards break his heart, and drives from his presence the true child for whose sake his lost kingdom is afterwards returned to him. She was the true woman at the first, for her thoughts were true; and for this true womanhood, shown out-

wardly in the end, her father crowned her. This lesson, so often set us in common history, making so many of the charms and surprises of actual life, is made specially prominent all through the Bible. As you think, so you are. Do not rely on the outward appearance which you make, dear friend. That is not you. That is not the man. You are what your habitual thinking is. Do the beautiful vestments clothe a noble and pure manhood, or do they hide a soul which is full of corruption? is the question for you to consider. And, on the other hand, if you have nothing outward to recommend you, if there is no beauty in you that others desire, if your face is more marred than any man's, yet none can be truer than you, none worthier. Oh how it reconciles us to the diversities of human allotments, some so helped and some so hindered in life, some strong and healthy and some sick and feeble always, some born to wealth and some to poverty, some never lacking friends and some without human friends, some conspicuous and influential and some obscure and unhonored, — how it reconciles us to all this diversity to see that none of it stands in the way of that which alone gives us value in God's eyes! Your kingdom is within you. Your outward condition does not put a chain on your soul. The brother of high degree has no occasion to despise the brother of low degree, and the brother of low degree has no occasion to envy the brother of high degree; for what each of them thinks, that he is. You are base if the tenor of your thoughts is base, and noble if your whole inward life is noble.

2. Another lesson to be drawn from this text is, that you must watch the free action of your soul if you would know what sort of a person you are.

There is a grain of truth in the fancy that men reveal their real character in their dreams, that in their cups they show what they are. They do, so far as their whole inner man is excited and left to act itself out freely. The sons of Zebedee once in a moment of excitement betrayed themselves, their sudden anger showing in them a spirit which they did not know. The warrior Achilles, who was passing himself off for anything but a warrior, showed his military passion when it was appealed to while he happened to be off his guard. Dear friends, take yourselves out of the midst of all the restraints from evil and all the incentives to good which now surround you, and what would you be? If honesty should cease to be the best policy, would you continue to be honest? If it were just as safe to tell lies as to tell the truth, would you keep on telling only the truth all the same? If you could get just as good a name by keeping all your money as by giving away freely, would you go on giving precisely as before? If idleness were just as reputable as diligence, rude manners just as well liked as kind manners, if you were sure of just as many friends by showing yourself unfriendly as by showing yourself friendly, would you continue to be as careful in these things as you now are? If so, you have gained a great victory. Your manhood is of the true stamp. It needs not to be bolstered up by anything outward. Leave your soul to itself. Let it act freely. And then let its action take shape in external pictures, and be reflected upon you. Would it make a fresco which you would like to contemplate? Yet the thinking — the free inner life, that is, as our text says — is the man. If that is good, if that is sound, if that is pure, then you may shut your eyes and see what is more glorious

than all sensuous beauty. You can find nothing else in this world so fair as a beautiful soul. Having the witness to this inheritance within you, you can treat outward grandeurs as Christ did the kingdoms and glory of the world. You can be content, as He was, not to have where to lay your head. Then not only are you a king and priest to God, whatever your temporal condition, but you have been born of God. That wondrous change which Christ works out in the soul in which He dwells, is going forward within you. He is in that inner life of yours, and is its cornerstone. God is building you up on Him. His spirit witnesses with your spirit that your soul, His living temple, is rising higher and higher, and in all its rooms becoming fairer and more vast. He laid the foundation, and He will lay the topmost stone; and all through the divine process, though no human eye admires it, you can secretly sing for joy, anticipating the day when the work shall be complete, and when the angels of God shall shout, "Grace, grace unto it."

3. Again, we may gather from our text that the sources of one's manhood are in his thoughts. They are the mould of his character. They determine whether he shall be great or small, honorable or dishonorable, before God. Since it is true that as we think in our hearts so we are, if we think large thoughts we shall become large-souled, or if we think only small thoughts our souls will be dwarfed and shrivel up; if we think pure thoughts our manhood or womanhood will be pure, but they will be impure if our thoughts are impure; if our minds dwell all the time on earthly things, our whole character will grovel, whereas it will shine with a heavenly brightness if our conversation is in heaven. Now here is a trial or test

which God brings to us all. We stand at the point from which two divergent roads start off. God puts before us good and evil, and He says to each one of us, "Choose thou." The alternative is not merely for some; it is for all. God is impartial; his gracious gifts are without monopoly or stint. It is just as open to the poorest as to the richest to have his soul concerned with great thoughts; just as easy to the unlearned as to the learned; no harder for the tender in years than for the wise and prudent. Such thoughts bend over us all, like the sky with its stars. Whatever your earthly condition, dear friends, this high culture of your soul is wholly within your reach. No man can shut you out from it. Let not your blindness, your weak yielding to what you call your unfriendly fate, keep you from entering upon it. God has come to shepherds, to slaves, to fishermen, to carpenters. And thus He still comes. The lower down you are in life, the more He loves to stoop to you and to raise you up above them that are high. The mighty themes of the gospel are all yours, and you may be moulded by them if you will. If you turn downward among frivolities and impurities, and make them the companions of your thoughts; then alas for you! You are sowing to the flesh, and of the flesh shall reap corruption. But if you shut the door of your heart against this ignoble herd, and keep it open to Him who comes with the bright train of heavenly themes, then, in your shop, in your store, in your office, in your home, on your wharf or your ship, on your railway train, you shall grow daily into the likeness of the glorious truths which are your company. You will make yourself pure by walking with Him who is infinitely pure. Your whole inner life is made

noble by your fellowship with Christ, for as you think in your heart so you are. You know what the words mean, "Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life." Your own experience is your blessed key to that text. You love to read the words of St. Paul: "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things." You have thought on them, and they have lifted you up to their own level. You have lived in heaven till you have caught its spirit. You have walked with God till the brightness of His character shines out from yours.

4. Or we may take our text as referring to the purposes which lie at the bottom of all our activity. What is our intention? Why are we doing as men see us doing in our open life? There is the thought of something to be gained, of some object to be won, in all this activity on which men look. Is the purpose selfish, or is it unselfish? Are we thinking to do something which will bless our fellow-men, or does our secret thought tell us that if we succeed we shall do them harm? Is it our purpose to glorify God, or simply to please ourselves? Here again, in this new view of it, it is his purpose of which he is thinking in his heart, which makes or unmakes the man. Is your purpose high? it will lift you up to itself. Is it low? it will drag you down to itself. Christ said to His disciples, "Where I am, there shall ye be," for they had in them a holy faith and purpose which took hold on Him. They could rise no higher than their purpose, as we cannot. Dear friends, the external work which you

do may all your lives be wholly noble. And noble friends may surround you. And you may dwell in noble mansions, full of all noble books and pictures. And you may look out on the noblest landscapes, and have noble teachers, examples, and opportunities, and yet be very ignoble yourself. No men ever had nobler surroundings, so far as this world goes, than the Roman emperors, some of whom touched the lowest bottom in the slough of moral baseness. And what was true of them, has been true of many, who had about them every incentive to a large and sound manhood. In spite of all helps, they went down so low that the greatest kindness we can do them is to forget them. Their low purpose unmanned and destroyed them in the midst of all their grandeurs. On the other hand, you may have none of the advantages which they had. You may be utterly forlorn and wretched in external condition. But is it your fixed and unconquerable purpose to be a true man or a true woman, all that Christ meant when He used those words? Is He the pattern which you have set before you, and which your soul is on fire to see realized in yourself, whatever troubles you must wade through? Then is that sacred purpose all the time moulding you. Christ feeds it out of His own life through secret channels. It is a part of His own fullness which He has breathed into you, and it will lift you to Him as surely as it came forth from Him.

5. Again, the fact that a man is as he thinks in his heart makes him responsible for himself in a very peculiar and solemn way. If what you are to be in the future depended on something outside of yourself, dear friend, you might say that it is your fate which makes you bad or which makes you good. No man's

circumstances lift him to God, and no man's circumstances cast him down from God. This rising or sinking on the scale of moral and spiritual worth is the result of his own deepest and inmost life. He thinks himself down into vice, into crime, into the power of his appetites, into a brutish and wicked and revolting state. Or, on the other hand, he thinks himself up into integrity, manliness, the love of all truth and of Him who was the truth. And the choice of the path along which our thinking shall take us is left to ourselves. No one can force us to turn either to the right hand or the left. However bound or hampered we may be in other respects, in our thoughts we are wholly free. In this kingdom within us we reign unhindered. Our dominion over our thoughts is absolute. And since the thoughts make the man, or unmake him, we cannot put the blame off on something else, but must take it wholly to ourselves, if we are dwarfed and distorted in soul when we come up before God. Our manhood or womanhood is something intrusted to us, which we are to keep and to answer for, just as truly as the talents were intrusted to the servants or the vineyard to the husbandmen. You can be a good man if you will, no matter what hinders, since it depends on the thoughts of your heart, which are free. How this power within you exalts you above all the other works of God's hand! It takes you out of nature, and raises you into the realm of the supernatural. What a sense we have of the preciousness of the human soul, while we see it thus supreme over all things about it, independent, free to go whichever way it will! No groove has been made for it in which it must forever move on. It thinks what it pleases, and hence becomes what it wills to be. No other creature

on earth has this power. The fact that we have it proves that we are the children of God. It was given to us that in virtue of it we may hold ourselves up in communion with the Father of our spirits; what condemnation, then, do we deserve to meet at His hands, if we use it, against all the other helps which He gives, to sink ourselves far from Him! Rejoice, O man, at that godlike spirit which is in you, but rejoice with trembling if you are ever tempted to think vain thoughts, or to harbor anything in your heart which is turning you away from your heavenly Father's face. No difficulties or want of opportunities can harm you so long as you are true to yourself, and all the helps which either God or man can give will not save you if you have become false to yourself. Nothing outside of you, but your own thinking, is either making or destroying you. If the thoughts of your heart are base, you are sinking down lower and lower; but if they are noble, they are the wings on which you are steadily rising higher and higher.

6. There is one other point, dear friends, on which I wish to say a word. What do you think of Christ? How does He seem to you? and how do you think of yourself in reference to Him? Do you think of Him as your Master, and of yourself as His servant? If not, should you not immediately begin to do so? For in this case, as in all the others named, it is largely true that as you think so you are. Perhaps this should not be said to all men; but are there not some here whose first duty is to think of themselves, and grow into the habit of thinking of themselves as servants of Jesus Christ? To the rash, conceited man it may be said, "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." To him who is eaten up with

the opinion of his own righteousness should come the text, "If a man think himself to be something when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself." But there are others, I am persuaded, who have done themselves great harm, and are still doing it, by being unwilling to think of themselves as Christ's disciples. I deny no great truth as to their need of the work of the Holy Spirit in their hearts, or the desirableness that they should have clear evidence of such work; yet have they not repelled themselves from Christ, till they now seem to be far from Him, just by the habit of thinking that they do not belong to Him? This feeling grew up early in your heart, dear friend. It was put there perhaps by some wrong teaching, or by some wrong impression which you got of the truth. You ceased to class yourself with God's people, and learned to think of yourself as belonging with His enemies. And this soon grew to be a habit, and is now even a matter of conscience with you. You can think of no great change, either outward or inward, which you need to undergo. Your Christian friends wonder why you are unwilling to be ranked with them. No one regards you as a foe to the cause of Christ, for you love to honor and help it in many ways. Dear friend, is there not just one change which you need to undergo, and that a change in your way of thinking of yourself? Thus far you have not thought of yourself as one of Christ's disciples. But change that habit, and think in your heart from this time forward that you are His follower, and see if the result will not be most blessed to you. It will give you a new point of view, from which you will see Christ and His people and all Christian truth putting on a new look. Thinking that you are Christ's friend, you will soon

find that you are His friend. Numbering yourself with His disciples, it will gradually dawn upon you that you are His disciple. Engaging in His work as not only His, but yours, you will come to know and to feel that He is yours and you are His.

THE IDEAL LIFE.

But it shall be one day, which shall be known to the Lord, not day, nor night: but it shall come to pass, that at evening time it shall be light. — ZECH. xiv. 7.

THIS text pictures to us that glorious state to which the whole church of God shall one day come, and in which every man already is to the degree that he dwells in God and God in him. When the life of God is formed within our lives so as to fill us with its blessed tides, then, dear friends, the unchangeableness of God also becomes ours. Our religious experience is not now stormy and now serene, not now a day and now a night; it is always one and the same thing, and there is in it a depth of joyous peace which neither sunlight nor starlight can figure forth.

We are most familiar with the second half of the text, "It shall come to pass that at evening time it shall be light," and we often use it in a way quite foreign to the prophet's purpose. Putting a meaning on the words which our lot in life or that of our friends suggests to us, the "evening time," bright and calm, is the quiet old age which succeeds to an active and troubled life; or it is the feeling of rest and victory which, in the midst of life, comes to us when we have fought some hard and long battle through to a successful end. How like a stormy day succeeded by a golden sunset many of the most valuable lives are! Looking upon the flaming west and walking toward it, while

the angry clouds are rolling away eastward behind us, we are like the worn soldier of the cross, — his campaigns now ended, heaven opening before him, and a nobler and nobler glory lighting up his face as he moves on toward the immortals. We have often seen the clear morning sun shining through the rain-cloud, and painting there the bow which forewarned us to be ready for the tempest. How soon that early brightness was obscured! The heavens grew black and wild, and all things on the earth — the birds, the animals, the trees, and the streams of water — seemed to shrink and creep with apprehension. Even the sea grew dark, and hushed its voice, as if getting all its store of might ready for the onset. Then the wind came, first in gentle puffs, hardly cooling our cheek, turning the light leaves, and barely rippling the surface of the water. But at length the thunder, whose distant rumble had been marshaling the elements, sounded the charge with its terrible voice, when they all rushed to the battle. The trees bent and moaned in the blast, and many of them were broken or up-torn. The summer brooks, swollen to mad torrents, swept away the farmer's fences, and drowned his crops. The fierce cannonade of the waves and the headlands began. The flying and whirling clouds shut out the sky. And all living things sought shelter from the wind and rain. We have often seen such a day as this. And then, near its close, we have seen the wind cease to blow and the rain to descend. The west grew bright, and the thunder died away. The bow was on the receding storm. The sunlight began to stream in the groves and along the lawns, every drop of water in the grass and on the buds was itself a gem, and the sun was floating away in an expanse of emerald

and gold, — all together making a scene too bright, too sweet, too peaceful, too uplifting and satisfying for tongue or pencil to describe. How often we have sat in such a sunset, and thought of the words of our text, “It shall come to pass at evening time that it shall be light.” And then there have come up before us the names of the brave and faithful in Christ Jesus, whose lives had been like that day of tempest, but whose last days were like that setting sun. We say that Bunyan was right in making a Beulah end the weary journey of his pilgrim. Job had a bright evening at the close of his day of trial; and so had Jacob, and David, and the apostle John; nor has this Sabbath at the end of life been denied to many another heroic servant of Christ, whom the world fiercely assailed, but of whom the world was not worthy. Or perhaps, as we sit in that bright ending of the stormy day, we look around on our friends who are in any trouble, and say to them, “Behold what your trial is bringing you to.” We try to comfort him whose body disease has invaded, and who fears that he must carry an aching brain, and drag after him weary limbs, the rest of his life. We cheer him by telling him to look beyond the gloomy present to the evening time when it shall be light. We say to those whose earthly expectation has been cut off, whose business has all gone wrong, whose efforts to do good and be useful make them no friends, who sit in sadness at home while the blossoms over which their hearts yearn are fading away, who find the struggle against temptation in their own hearts and lives so desperate that they fear the issue, — to all such, and to any other children of men who are sorely tried, we say, “See what a bed of glory has been given to yonder sun on which to sink

to rest, and think of the day of storms which is just over. Expect such an ending to your sorrows, your afflictions, your trials, your temptations. It is coming, coming, — that evening time in which it shall be light; if not yours in this life, it shall be in the next; for what is heaven but a bright endless evening, where all your trouble shall be turned into peace, and from which you shall look back only to praise and bless your God for the life on earth which He gave you?"

Thus do we comfort one another with these words. But they have a greater meaning than that which I have now brought out. It is not the hope of blessedness in the far future so much as the possession of it where we now are, right in the midst of sorrow, struggle, and tumult, that the text offers us. If we have in us the life of God, that life which comes through union to Christ, our evening time in which it shall be light is the present darkness through which we are passing. There is no waiting for the storm to pass over, but in the midst of it we are as calm as the ocean depths beneath the stormy waves, we are as radiant as the sun smiling above the clouds. The "evening time" of which the prophet speaks is not that which comes before, but that which comes after the going down of the sun; it is not a bright, calm evening at the close of a stormy day, but a gloomy night following a day which has been calm and sunny. You who are not in the midst of trouble and difficulty, who are in health and prosperity, but who, knowing the common lot, anticipate trials in store for you, need have no dread of those trials. They may shut down upon you in blackness and tempest, but the life of God in your soul will make the night light about you. You need not fear the time of adversity, however sure

you may be that it is coming, or however near it may be. The darkness and the light are both alike to Him with whom you are walking. Let the evening time come! it shall only prove that you live and move in God. Let it come! for you there is no darkness, no storm or gloom, even though it be the evening time. Your whole body is filled with that life which is the light of men. It is all one to you whether darkness or sunshine rests on the face of the earth about you. You have no need of the sun to shine upon you, or the moon to give you light by night, for God is your glory and the Lamb doth lighten you. Thus does your faith, making you one with God and causing you to dwell in heaven, take away all power to hurt you, from the evil days to come. But you may already be in the midst of the evening time, dear friends. Is your bright day over? Has your sun suddenly gone down, and are you shut in by a night of gloom? Then it becomes you to ask whether the blessed promise of the text is made good to you. Is your God one who gives you songs in the night? Do you find yourself upheld while you walk in darkness, being stayed on him? Passing through the deep waters, do you find that they do not overflow you? and have you grace and strength for your trial, however great it is? If a hearty *yes* is your answer to one and all of these questions, then it is certain that the life of God has entered into and is filling your life. There is not power for such an experience in our unhelped human nature. If we thus triumph over the sorest present ills, we must do it in the strength of God. It is his shadow over us which makes us abide in perfect peace. Our peace which the world cannot take away, is not a peace which the

world gave. God gives it to us by His own blessed indwelling, and it is the peace of God which passeth understanding. It is the peace which was Christ's, and which He gave to His disciples, who were in Him as He was in the Father. Do not stand in doubt of yourself, dear friend, though you see not this light in your evening time as clearly as you would. You are compassed about by infirmities. The life of God in you must struggle with these. You cannot yet say that your night shines about you as your day once did. But if you have brightening gleams of this experience, if you can say that adversity is not all adversity, as prosperity was not all prosperity, and that in them both you have a sweet fellowship with God which is forever independent of all earthly conditions, then may you be sure that you are at least beginning to receive into your soul the one blessedness which can never come to an end, which is all the time growing and intensifying within you; the blessedness which is your assurance that God has come down into your life, and that he is steadily drawing your life more and more up into his.

But not even yet have we fathomed the meaning of our text. We need to look at the first half of it as well as the second. Listen! "It shall be one day, which shall be known to the Lord, not day nor night." One continuous day is the life of the true Christian; not a day made by the shining of the natural sun, and put out when the evening comes; a day which God knows, and of which He is the source; not a natural day, half dazzling sunshine and half blinding darkness; something supernatural, unchanging, immortal; not the garish day nor the thick night, but an everlasting light, which has all

the good of our natural morning and evening without any of the evil. We may call it morning or evening, just which we choose, since there is no exact word for it; but it is a morning which does not dazzle, and an evening which does not take away the light. It is neither morning nor evening, nor such a day as we know, but one which God knows, which is within the light of setting and of rising suns, and which we find as our quickened faith makes us more and more one with God. Oh what an hour of peace and rapture when this divine day begins to dawn upon the soul! It warms but it does not scorch, it reveals and beautifies without dazzling, it is both cool and bright, it is softly shaded yet ever balmy; infinitely more than all that we love in the four seasons of our year, in our gladdest days and most starry nights, is in this one day, — the day of God kindling in man, which makes man the conscious child of God and the partaker of His unchanging blessedness. This was the glorious inheritance which the prophet offered to his people. Though they scorned it, forsaking their God, yet he knew that some should enter upon it, if not sooner at least in the end of the world. Oh what a time for our longing and bewildered world, when that day of the Lord, which is neither day nor night, shall come! when His glory shall fill the earth as the waters fill the seas; when you and I and every other child of God shall taste that blessedness which His coming into the soul and there abiding alone can give! This meeting with God, to dwell in eternal communion with Him, is the only point at which our storm-tossed humanity can be at rest. This great truth, which is the central truth of all real religion, gives their wondrous power to the words of Christ, which are

sweeter to us the oftener we repeat them: "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly of heart. And ye shall find rest unto your souls, for my yoke is easy and my burden is light." There is a place far down in the depths of the ocean where its waters are forever still; there is a point in the realms of æther above the air where no wind or cloud ever comes; there are favored spots on the earth where the genial temperature hardly varies from age to age. And so there is a blessed centre in the life of God which He brings to us, where the soul which has found that centre knows no changing of lights or shadows, but rests forever in the unchanging peace of God. Oh that we might find that holy of holies! More than has entered into all our dreams of the nature of true blessedness is gathered there. It is the ideal climate, where the joys of all other climes blend into one; it is the pearly depth to which no wave ever goes down; it is the ethereal height into which neither wind nor cloud can rise. When we have found our God, and are dwelling in Him, His own immutableness will come into us. There will be no more variations in our religious life, ecstasies yesterday and despondency to-day, now hoping and again doubting, light and darkness alternating or making painful twilight within us; no agitations or disturbances, but the serene and changeless calm of our God, in whom we live and of whose nature we partake. Let the outward conditions of our lives be what they may, our spirits, which are ourselves, are all the same. The day of our prosperity is no bright and deceitful day, nor is the night of calamity a season of real

gloom. Our God is a pillar of cloud by day, and of fire by night. Nay, more than that; He is something far other than either day or night; so that neither nor both of these can rise up to the idea of the shadowed brightness in which we live. It is one day, such as God forever inhabits; a divine day which is not day nor night; which cools and softens the noontide sun, and makes the evening time light.

You need not tell me that I am describing an experience which no mere man has ever yet had, for of that I am thoroughly aware. Nor is this fact any reason why we should be cast down in mind, but the rather cause for rejoicing. No merely human soul has yet been filled with the life of God while in the flesh. The experience of which our text speaks is before and above us all. It is the ideal experience, not yet realized any more than all beauty has been in works of art. The Bible has much to say about it, holds it out before us as the mark toward which we are to press, shows us that the best of men like ourselves have come short of it. The friends of Job had an idea of this perfect peace, and could upbraid Job for his lack of it, but neither he nor they had entered into it; and so I who speak and you who listen may be alike destitute of it, even while it fills us with a yearning desire. Some of this life and peace of God entered into the soul of Abraham. He was so nearly one with God that God talked with him face to face, and he was called God's friend; nor did even the command to offer his son Isaac as a sacrifice seem to disturb his inner calm; yet an earthly current mingled with the divine in his soul: he did things which God disapproved; he was not always serene and heavenly in mind; his day was not the one day which

is neither day nor night, but a succession of lights and shadows much like those through which we are passing. The same failure to enter fully into the life of God is to be seen in Moses, in Samuel, in David, in Isaiah; in all the Old Testament saints, who saw the glory in which God dwelt, but could not come unto it. Perhaps of all those of whom we read in our Bibles who sought this ideal experience, this perfect union with God, the apostle John came nearer than any other. I think the words which say that he leaned on his Lord's bosom, and was the disciple whom Jesus loved, mean more than we sometimes think. There was more than the outward and physical fact of reclining on the Master's breast: the very soul of John rested on Christ, and found blessed peace in Him. Jesus loved him because their two souls flowed together, and became one in God. Yet this John, who came so near the ideal experience, and who seems in his gospel and epistles to speak to us out of the very heart of God, was not perfect. He had somewhat of the fierce spirit of Elijah, and like him would call down fire from heaven on his enemies. Once he, too, like the other disciples, forsook his Master and fled. Clearly, the day which God knows, which is one blessed day, tempering the noontide and making the evening light, was not his. He beheld it from afar, and could speak of it in rapturous words, but it eluded his out-reaching arms; so that without us he could not be made perfect. Near to John, or on the same level, stands St. Paul. You read certain passages in his writings, and you say, "Surely this man tasted all that the indwelling of God can give to any human soul." Yes, but he only tasted it, he did not live in that and that alone. Though he was caught up into

the third heaven, passing through an experience more blessed than he could tell; though he was so swallowed up in God as not to know whether he was in or out of the body; though he could say that it was Christ for him to live, and also to die, so that whether he lived or died was a matter of indifference to him; though he could write the 8th of Romans, and the 13th and 15th of 1st Corinthians, and could say that he was ready to be offered, and would thank God if made a part of his brethren's sacrifice of faith, — yet he confessed that he was compassed with infirmities. It is doubtful if he ever wholly subdued his naturally imperious temper. This may have been the thorn in the flesh, which God did not take away in answer to his prayer, the messenger of Satan buffeting him all through his life lest he should be too much elated by his spiritual attainments. But there was much which he did not attain, much which he did not apprehend, though apprehended for it in Christ Jesus. He was continually forgetting the things behind him, and looking forth unto the things before, knowing even when he most deeply shared in the fullness of God that he was not already perfect. Yes, even the holiest of God's servants found their religious experience a ladder like that at Bethel, beginning on the earth, but reaching away upward and upward, forever up into the light in which God dwells. Yet how God came down to them along that shining ladder! How He took hold of them, and blessed and inspired them! How He honored them, making them able to speak and write the messages of saving love which He would send to His sinning children here below! The experience which they yearned for is the same that we yearn for, and our feet are on the lower rounds of the

ladder along which they have climbed away upward. We may follow them as they followed Christ, and the farther we go the more shall we thank God that we are started in an ever-lengthening pathway. The road of Christian attainment has for us a beginning, but it has no end. "Long enough have ye compassed this mountain; hasten on, the land of promise is still before you," is the trumpet call ever arousing us to our life of love and duty. Let us bless God for this. Our joy consists not in what we have already gained, but in the consciousness that we are all the time advancing. We sometimes wonder what we shall do in the long eternity before us. Dear friends, nothing short of an eternity can satisfy the most sacred yearning of our souls. We yearn for the infinite peace of God, but we have not gained it, nor shall we ever gain it; but we shall draw nearer and nearer to it, and the consciousness of this progress, of this closer and fuller oneness of life with God, will throughout the eternal ages be the secret of all our blessedness and joy. We shall forever be getting farther into the bright country, the sources of whose rivers of pleasure we can never reach, hearing sweeter and louder strains of the anthems which roll unceasingly, taking in more and more of that divine day which is a light at evening time and a shadow at the scorching noon. One who was known and loved on earth, our blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, lived out before men the life of perfect union with the Father. All the fullness of the Godhead dwelt in Him. But He stands alone and unapproachable. Only He, of all that have dwelt in the flesh, has had that religious experience which is to us a far-off ideal. He is in the Father and the Father is in Him. The one day, neither day nor night, which

God knows, is also wholly known to Christ. No trouble or suffering ever took away His peace, but He dwelt in the bosom of the Father even while His life-blood flowed down the cross. He had meat to eat which the world knew not of. In His deepest agony and humiliation He was infinitely blessed. And He, dear friends, our one witness that the words of our text may come true, was bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh. He makes us members of His own body. He declares that where He is there shall we be also. We shall, through infinite and adorable riches of free grace in Him, attain unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. No matter who you are, or what you are; the most worldly and hardened, the poorest, the weakest, the abandoned, the corrupted and lost, oh, come to this Saviour just as you are, and call Him your Lord and God, and begin to keep His words! In Him there shall not fail you anything of all that has been spoken by holy men of old. You are God's child. His nature dwells in you, making it possible that you should enter into communion with Him. Let that communion now begin, — the communion which may cause you some struggles with a worldly heart, but which shall bring more and more of the peace of God into you, till you shall sink into Him as the river sinks into the sea.

SEEING THE KING IN THE FAR-OFF LAND.

Thine eyes shall see the King in His beauty ; they shall behold the land that is very far off. — ISA. xxxiii. 17.

THIS is one of a class of passages in the Old Testament which have been taken up into Christian experience, and made to point forward, in their meaning and application, to the most glorious hopes and promises of the gospel. Whatever blessed state of things in the land of Israel Isaiah may have referred to, we refer his words, almost instinctively, to the condition and the inheritance of the righteous in heaven. “The King in His beauty,” whom our eyes shall see, is the glorified and reigning Christ, enthroned in the midst of the four beasts and the four-and-twenty elders ; a rainbow round about His head, crowned with many crowns, His raiment white and glistening, His countenance as the sun shining in His strength ; an innumerable company worshiping before Him, and ascribing unto Him, with a voice which is as the voice of many waters, glory and honor and dominion and power and blessing. And “the land that is very far off,” which every struggling and toiling believer shall behold, is, to our quickened faith, the better country, even the heavenly ; the land where there shall be no more sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain ; where are the tree of life, and the river of water of life ; the blessed abode of holiness, joy, and peace, in the immediate presence and the love of

God. What we sometimes call "the beatific vision," the radiant and enrapturing scene which shall burst upon us when we are clothed upon with our house from heaven, is, to our yearning souls, the inner meaning of the words which say, "Thine eyes shall see the King in His beauty; they shall behold the land that is very far off."

There is one revelation of Christ and His heavenly glory to us, which takes place at the beginning of our discipleship under Him. Of this we have a striking instance in the conversion of St. Paul. He called it "the heavenly vision," and gloried in the fact that he was not disobedient unto it, while he showed to king Agrippa how great things God had done for him. That vision, in one form or another, and with greater or less power, is vouchsafed to every soul in the hour of repentance, when, convicted of its sin, it believes on the Lord Jesus Christ.

Besides this manifestation of the exalted Lamb of God, which breaks upon us at the outset of the new life, sometimes overwhelming us with terror and despair, is that constant revelation of His presence which we have with us all through our pilgrimage. We live, day by day, as seeing Him who is invisible. Our conversation is in heaven. We walk by faith, and not by sight. The Father and Son come unto us and make their abode with us. We understand all the time, inwardly and secretly, yet most blessedly, what Christ meant when He said, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."

We therefore see the King in His beauty, and the far-off land is disclosed to us in the hour of our conversion; and that radiant form and country attend us in overhanging vision all through our earthly jour-

ney; and at the end of that journey we are brought into an enjoyment of Christ's presence and heavenly glories, so full and transporting that all the past is hardly remembered. The awfulness of the first hour of deep repentance is succeeded by the sweet and peaceful trust of Christian discipleship; and this, like some umbrageous avenue leading away through distant vistas till it is lost in the midst of half-discerned fountains and mansions and leafy bowers, reminds us that the real blessedness and riches and glory of the Christian state are still unseen, — an inheritance not yet entered upon, and for which our outreaching hearts daily pray and yearn. We are not satisfied, as we one day shall be. We hunger and thirst after righteousness, but we shall be filled. We shall be satisfied. The vision of the future, when we see as we are seen, shall eclipse the past with its infinite splendors. There is first the joy that has come down to us, and secondly the joy that goes with us through our earthly discipline; but, withdrawing your minds from these, I wish to point you, for a little, to that other joy, — the last, greatest, and best of all, — of which only the "trailing splendors" now fall about us, and which beckons us on to that full possession of it into which we shall at length enter. What words could possibly describe it to us more fitly, dear friends, than those of the prophet, in which he says to you, to me, to every penitent believer, to each mourning or persecuted or tried and tempted child of God, "Thine eyes shall see the King in His beauty; they shall behold the land that is very far off"?

This delightful land of heaven, where Christ shall be revealed in beauty to the beholding soul, is called a far-off land, (1) not to teach us that we are separated

from it by any great distance of space or time. Such teaching would be contrary to all our knowledge of this present life. It is a short life, and a very uncertain life. In this sense of distance, heaven cannot be said to be a far-off land to any believer. It may be very near; he may enter into it to-morrow, or even sooner. Christ said to the penitent thief, in the moment of his first submission, "This day shalt thou be with me in Paradise." Whenever there is but a step between the true Christian and death, there is but a step between him and the bright country whose glorious King he shall see as soon as he enters it. The golden city may be nearer to us than we think, nor do we know but that even in this passing hour the time of our departure may come. It is as true of believers as of unbelievers, that their days are as a shadow, and that they spend their years as a tale that is told. Nor is the full vision of Christ said to be in a far-off land (2) because the work of sanctification in us must necessarily be long and tedious. If this were so, there must needs be all the time very many imperfect saints in heaven. The number of believers who live many years here in the flesh, subject to the refining influences of divine grace after they have believed, is comparatively few. In the case of the vast majority, the purifying work of the Spirit is far from complete in them when they go hence to be here no more. We must assume, therefore, that a wonderful change takes place in them at death, by which they are suddenly brought into a perfectly holy state; else how can it be true of heaven that "there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth, or whatsoever worketh abomination or loveth a lie"? And if this transformation takes place at death in the case of all, many of whom

are as yet but babes in Christ, why may we not believe that it is possible even before death, to those whose faith is sufficient? Christian perfection is not something which we must necessarily travel towards through long years of discipline; and yet this view, I suspect, accords better than the other with what the great mass of believers experience. Some of us may have been followers of Christ for half a century; and still we are far off, — our infirmities and failures in duty make us look forward to complete holiness as a distant land. Not here, but somewhere in the coming eternity, we shall be like our King, and see Him in His beauty, is the whisper of our honest hearts. We may be already complete in Him, but not in ourselves; justified, but not sanctified; freed from the condemning power of sin, but not yet without sin. The wonderful charm of the Pilgrim's Progress for all Christian hearts proves that we naturally think of our perfection and blessedness as far-off attainments. The way from the City of Destruction to the Celestial City is a long and toilsome way, beset with dangers, full of fears and hopes and errors and deliverances. Even if it need not be so, yet so it almost always is. The necessity is not in God, nor in the nature of things, but in ourselves. The life of Christ, into whom we are grafted, does not all at once flow into us in this world, but only gradually, till at length we are full of the fruits of the Spirit.

These words of the prophet seem to me to suggest, most strikingly, (1) The vast moral contrast between earth and heaven; (2) the wide difference between the earthly and the heavenly condition of Christ; (3) the mighty change which we must undergo, before we can stand before Him, and see Him as He is.

(1) The corruptions in the earth are so many and great, and we are so unable to see the steady growth of Christ's kingdom, that it is hard for us to believe in an earthly paradise. We at times seriously doubt whether the world is to be purified by its own gradual improvement, till it becomes a fit abode for Christ, to which He may return and dwell in glory among His people. In such moods of mind we turn rather to the words which declare that the earth and the works which are therein shall be destroyed, that it shall pass away with a great noise, that the elements which compose it shall melt and be dissipated by the fervent heat. Our heaven is not this planet on which we now are, but a far-off land; it is beyond the moon and the stars; it is a city builded higher than the clouds; it is a peaceful region, prepared of God at the remote centre of His universe, into which the confused noise of mortal strife cannot reach; where the fever and fret of the selfish life are buried with the forgotten past; within whose veil the shadows of lust, and wicked scandal, and human shame never fall. It is not here, but there; not in this land where we now dwell, but in the land that is very far off, that this sweet rest and experience of a pure and blessed life shall begin. Not where cruel passions rage, but where all is peace, we shall see our glorious King.

(2) These words of Isaiah paint to us the present exaltation of Christ in contrast with His lowly lot among men. Call Him up before your minds as He was: His birth in the manger; His parents hiding Him from Herod; dwelling, till He was thirty years old, in the little hill-town of Nazareth; a carpenter, and the son of a carpenter; without wealth or powerful earthly friends; despised and rejected by his own countrymen;

obliged to find His friends among publicans and outcasts ; choosing for His disciples the humble fishermen of Galilee ; going about from city to city ; subsisting on the fruits which grew by the wayside and in the fields ; sleeping upon the mountains and in the open air ; often without a place where to lay His head ; destitute of a change of raiment ; betrayed, by one whom He had honored, to His savage-hearted foes ; treated as the worst and meanest of human criminals, in his arrest, trial, and execution ; forsaken of His friends, and left helpless to the rage of the powers of darkness, in His extremity. But now that same Jesus, who is both Lord and Christ, is exalted at the right hand of God. He is a prince and a Saviour. All the angels of God worship Him. His garments are light and majesty, His form and countenance glorious ; His word, going out of his mouth, is like a two-edged sword, and He holds the stars in His right hand. Now this glorious contrast, this transfiguration of the earthly lot of Christ into His heavenly condition, is represented to us under the figure of the land that is very far off ; under the figure of the King in His beauty, over against the Galilean peasant who bore suffering and shame and the bitter cross. We think of it as a distant region in which the man of sorrows at length rejoices ; it cannot be here, but far away, that the crown of thorns has blossomed into beauty ; the suffering Christ came down so low to us, and the reigning Christ has gone up so high, above all principalities and powers in heavenly places, that no length of time is too great, no distance in space too vast, to represent the wonderful and glorious change which He has undergone.

(3) The figure of speech used by the prophet,

reminds us also of the mighty inward and moral change which we all must experience in order that we may be ready for the beatific vision. We could not endure the sight of Christ amid His heavenly glories, while in our evil and sinful state. His presence would consume us, as hay, wood, and stubble are consumed by the fire. Moses could not endure the sight of God; Abraham could not; again and again a flame came out from the Lord, and slew those who approached rashly before Him; the three favorite disciples fell on their faces and were sore afraid, when Christ was transfigured before them in the mount. John in Patmos had a vision of Christ; yet he could not bear the glory, and says that he fell down as one dead at his Lord's feet. Now if this moral contrast was so great and overwhelming in his case, who was an apostle, acting and speaking under the immediate guidance of the Holy Ghost, what must it be in our case! We are bundles of imperfections. We have but just begun to submit ourselves to the tuition of Christ, or are yet only considering whether or not we will be His disciples. But our fretful and irascible spirit must be replaced by His resigned and peaceful spirit. Our selfishness must be changed to love. Instead of doubts and suspicions, we must be full of a trustful mind. Murmurings must give way to contentment in our hearts, censoriousness to charity, covetousness to benevolence, pride to lowliness, fear of the world to brave and open confession of our Redeemer. Such is the transformation which we must undergo, and all the fruits of the spirit must be in us and abound, in order that there may be a real and joyous union of our souls to God. It is a mighty transformation, as we see; but it shall take place,

by those helps which God has provided, though with man it were impossible. When we think of what we are, and of what we are to be when we stand before Christ, there is a wonderful expressiveness to us in the words which speak of Him as dwelling in the land that is very far off. We must traverse continents of gracious discipline, we must climb over high mountains of earthliness and sin, we must sail across wide oceans of Christian attainment, before we enter into that radiant country, and look on the face of its beautiful King. His ways are above our ways, and His thoughts higher than our thoughts; even as the heavens are higher than the earth. All our hope, poor and sinful creatures that we are, of one day being like Him, and seeing Him as He is, is in the power of His own all-accomplishing love. He can bring a clean thing out of the unclean. He can change the image of the earthly into the image of the heavenly. He has prayed the Father for us, that we might be with Him, and behold Him in His glory. That prayer is sure to be answered; to be effectual in the case of each feeblest and lowest soul, which yearns to see the King in the far-off land. Looking upon His face even now, in the exercise of that faith which unites to Him, we are daily transfigured into His glorious image by the inworking of the Spirit of God. Our transgressions are removed from us as far as the east is from the west; the righteousness of Christ, with which we are clothed and shod, does not wax old in this wilderness. Each day's advance in our journey but marks the progress of the spiritual change whereby Christ, who has been formed within us, is subduing all things unto Himself, and bringing each deepest and most secret thought of our hearts into sweet harmony and loving obedience under Him.

Now, it is in view of this bright and blessed future that I wish to encourage every believer in Christ, and to exhort every soul to come after Him. (1) It may be that some here, after long years of discipleship, have been thrown into doubt respecting the glory yet to be revealed. Their spiritual life, sympathizing with that of the flesh, burns low amid the infirmities which gather upon them with age. The vision of Christ is faint and dim to them, does not fill them with raptures as it once did. I do not deny that there has been this waning of joy and hope in their Christian experience. I grant the sincerity of their feeling that the land in which Christ dwells in beauty is very far off. But, dear friends, the promises of God are sure. He can change these feeble and decaying bodies into the likeness of his own most glorious body. He can replace these failing fleshly senses with those strong spiritual perceptions which are fully able to apprehend the splendors of his person. His assurance is positive and emphatic. "Thine eyes *shall* see the King in his beauty; they *shall* behold the land that is very far off." No decay of mortal powers, no weight of years, sorrows, or sicknesses can keep you out of the bright inheritance. Wherefore comfort one another with these words. Bear with holy patience the lot which is upon you, though the silver cord be loosed, and the golden bowl broken. Your want of a vivid sense of the nearness and love of Christ is but that drowsiness which steals upon the soul, giving you gentle warning of the sleep which he giveth his beloved, — not the sleep which knows no waking, as we sometimes say, but out of which you shall wake to joys unspeakable, in the dawn of the everlasting morning. (2) Let the prospect of the

beatific vision also cheer those who are bearing the heat and burden of the day in Christ's vineyard. You have great trials of your fortitude and patience. You are often at your wit's end. It seems to you that you labor in vain, and spend your strength for naught. The more you love, the less you are loved; and your good is evil spoken of. Oftentimes your own hearts betray you, and before you are aware you are overtaken in a fault. Thus your life seems to be at cross-purposes with itself, and you have no comforting assurance that you are helping forward the kingdom of Christ, either within or around you. But, dear brethren, your reward is certain. Your efforts to bring others to Christ, though seemingly futile, are precious to God. Your reward is laid up for you. "*Thine* eyes shall see the King in his beauty," is the blessed word of God to you, though all the world beside should refuse to go with you to the far-off land, and behold Him. "If in this life only we had hope," said Saint Paul, "we were of all men most miserable." But you are not shut up, as he was not, to this disturbed and uncertain life. You have hope in the life which is beyond life, and that hope is full of immortality. Let it be an anchor to your soul. Let it keep you from fainting, or turning aside, or faltering, or being at all discouraged. It entereth into that which is within the veil. There Christ sitteth for you, not ignorant of your labor of love,—knowing, as no one else knoweth, how you have borne, and have had patience, and have labored and not fainted. You shall enter that radiant land, and look on its beautiful King; and throughout all the way to it you may sing to yourself those grand words of the hymn —

“And, oh! from that bright throne
I shall look back, and see,
The path I went, and that alone,
Was the right path for me.”

(3) And if there be any here, as there doubtless are some, who stand on the threshold of the kingdom, just entering it, or considering whether to enter, let me exhort you, dear friends, to press forward. Be earnest, determined, persevering, even violent, in your efforts; for you know that the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force. Let no bands of armed men, thronging the doorway and brandishing their weapons, keep you from pressing into the beautiful palace, — the Church of Christ, whence the voice of singing, from them that are clothed in white, issues forth to you. The vision of warning, such as came to Saul of Tarsus, has already visited you. Be not disobedient to that; and so this, — the vision of the King in his beauty, in the far-off land, shall bless your eyes in the day when you awake in Christ's likeness. You see it not now, but you have an irrepressible yearning for it; and that yearning should be to you the proof that it may be yours, for God has put no want in the soul which He has not provided the means of gratifying. For this reason, first of all, you should believe in that vision; and you should believe in it because God has promised it to all his faithful children, and because so many believers, extending in long succession through the history of the Church, have testified to the sweet foretastes of it which have visited them in their pilgrimage. They have known it in part; they have seen it through a glass darkly, though not face to face. The glass of faith has trembled in their hands while they have

stood on the Delectable Mountains; yet have they beheld with their eyes, even they and not another, the glittering domes, and lofty towers, and shining forms, in the city which lieth four-square, — the city of love, whose length and breadth and height are equal. That bright land, which is the abode of our exalted King, is too far off to be seen from the City of Destruction, from the Slough of Despond, from the Wicket Gate. But we give you the divine promises, our own experience, and the deep longing in your soul, as proof that it is a reality; it hath foundations; properly speaking, it is the only country, for it is spiritual and eternal, and shall flourish in unchanging freshness when the place of our mortal abode has vanished away. Enter in through the gate, fearless of any arrows which the enemy of souls may shoot at you from behind the wall. Your knocking for admittance will be heard; and a hand, in which is the print of a nail, shall be reached forth to pull you in. Christ will offer to you His own easy yoke, His own light burden. He will teach you; and, in the meek and lowly heart which you get from Him, you shall even now begin to find rest to your soul. But it is only the spring, the rivulet, the stream flowing on within its banks, at first. The ocean is far away. You shall have foregleams of the King in His beauty here, but there your eyes shall see Him. More love, more faith, more obedience, shall come into your soul; and these, daily strengthening your spiritual faculties, shall enable you more and more to lay hold of the glory of God set before you. Not in utter loneliness, nor in growing or undiminishing darkness, shall you go forward. The consciousness that you are not alone, but God is with you, shall little by little spring up in you. The

shadows shall grow less as you advance, till they disappear, one after another, in the light which is brighter than the sun at noonday. You shall go out of the fleshly life into the spiritual life, out of worldly-mindedness into heavenly-mindedness, out of weakness into strength, out of penitence into joy in the Lord. Your pilgrimage may be long and tortuous, or it may be short and straightforward; but it is sure to end in eternal peace. You shall see the King in His beauty, for that which makes Him beautiful has become the indwelling life and the very substance of your own soul; your eyes shall behold the land, that it is very far off, for you are already a citizen of that country, born into it by the new and celestial birth; and you are traveling toward it, with a blessed homesickness in your heart, all the days that you are a stranger and pilgrim here.

CHRISTIAN CHARACTER ITS OWN VINDICATION.

Wisdom is justified of her children. — *MATT. xi. 19.*

IT is remarkable how little pains Christ took to justify or explain His own conduct. He speaks, in this eleventh chapter of Matthew, of His manner of life as contrasted with that of John the Baptist. John's habits were ascetic, in sympathy with the old dispensation of law; Christ entered freely into society with men, as became the joyous spirit of the gospel. There were some who found fault with the sternness of John, and others who complained of the social ways of Christ. Christ states the fact, but He does not give any reason for it. He simply says, "Wisdom is justified of her children." He and John both, that is, were serving the same essential cause; they were working out the one great plan of redemption. They understood each other, and were fundamentally in accord notwithstanding outward differences. Nor was this all; for any other persons, serving the same divine cause, would recognize them both as co-workers, and rejoice in them. The fact, therefore, that one party disliked John, and another party disliked Christ, proved that neither of these parties was in hearty sympathy with the kingdom of God. If they had been the children of wisdom, they would have recognized wisdom through any drapery of personal peculiarities or habits, such as made Christ and John to

differ. It is not to be expected that all Christians will be exact copies of their Master in each outward particular; much less that they will agree among themselves always in regard to what may be proper or improper in the manifold relations of life. Liberty is allowed them in these minor matters. Nor need they be all the time explaining and defending their habits. If they have the spirit of Christ, they will dwell together in love, and labor together for the upbuilding of His kingdom, not worried by their differences, but the rather rejoicing in them. It is not necessary that they should come into collision. They need spend no time justifying themselves to one another. Each one of them sees that it is natural temperament, parentage, education, surroundings, which make them unlike. They severally grant the measure of liberty which they take. It is their common devotion to the grand central interest which makes them one. This devotion marks them all out as the children of wisdom; and by virtue of that wisdom they stand justified to each other, no more likely to fall into angry disputes than are the flowers of the field to quarrel because they do not all happen to be of the same color and fragrance. Christians conscientiously serving God are sure to be justified by other Christians of like zeal and fidelity. This vindication is the best any believer can have in this world, and it is almost useless for him to seek any other. Those who do not see that he is a child of wisdom, can hardly be made to see that He is. We waste breath, and time, and strength, in trying to make ourselves understood by those who are determined to misunderstand us. We should save what we thus throw away, and use it in our Master's service, since we need it all in finishing the work He has given

us to do. Such seems to be the explanation of Christ's own silence on all those occasions when crafty men came to Him asking Him why He did thus or thus, and He refused to tell them. Infinite though He was in resources, He yet had no strength to be wasted in convincing the foolish. Though brayed in a mortar, their folly would not depart from them. What behooved Him was to reveal Himself as the eternal wisdom by working out for men a spiritual redemption, which work none of the wise would fail to see, and approve, and rejoice in. "So live that others, seeing your good works, shall be led to glorify your heavenly Father." "So live" is the injunction. Not so explain, or defend, or seek to justify your lives, that others about you shall approve your cause; if they criticise, or complain, or assault you, stand not on the defensive, but live on, still, the life which is by the faith of the Son of God, and that holy living will sooner or later convince as many as by any means can be persuaded. Such was Christ's way of meeting opposition; and He recommends it to all His followers; and the whole eighteen hundred years of His kingdom have shown that this is the only weapon with which we can effectually beat down opposers of the truth. Men have learned with what profound insight Christ spoke these words. The only sure way of putting down slander, misrepresentation, evil prejudice, is to live it down. No amount of statements and explanations, spread out before the public, have any weight at all in themselves. They are believed, only as the man who makes them has proved that he is worthy to be believed, by a steady course of conduct. The person who "rises to explain," either thereby shows himself in the wrong, or unnecessarily anxious. We begin

to suspect him as his apologies multiply. On the contrary, if he is silent, and goes on quietly attending to his duties, our confidence in him increases. Nothing else so vindicates a man as his own serene silence, while he is able to show, in connection with that silence, a blameless and useful life. Abuse, hurled at such a one, only returns to plague its inventors.

The Christian, therefore, who hears the buzz of scandal rising about him, while he is faithfully following his Master, should not stop to deny or answer any charge, but keep calmly on; for his stopping and turning aside, instead of mending matters, will be likely to make them worse; he needs no vindication besides his silent faithfulness; wise men ask only for that, nor will the world really accept any other.

We read in the twenty-first chapter of Matthew that the chief priests and elders came to Christ, just after His triumphal entry into Jerusalem, seeking an explanation of His conduct. They asked Him by what authority He did such things. He replied that He would tell them, if they would answer Him a single question: was John the Baptist commissioned of God, or by men? But they dared not answer; for if they said John came from God, it would convict them of sin in not believing him; and if they denied to him all divine authority, they feared the people, who held John to be a prophet. I have seen this passage criticised, in a certain skeptical book, as proving that Christ evaded honest questions in a spirit of mere banter and artifice. The charge is a fair specimen of the many and gross misconstructions on which infidels found their objections to the Bible. The question which Christ asked was a most pertinent one. It was a test question. Its object was to bring out, as it

most clearly did, the unfitness of the priests and elders to judge either Him or His doings. It showed them that they were swayed in their judgment by the fear of man. They did not dare say just what they thought of John, and were ready to say either one of two directly opposite things, as should make most for their present ease and safety; or if they could not do this, they would refuse to say anything. The fact that they had no honesty, no sincerity, no supreme love of the truth, but were willing to change and barter their opinions for temporal advantages, was thus made to stand glaringly forth. They must have felt in their own consciences, after this exposure, that they had no right to ask any one to come to them for judgment. If Christ had been in doubt of His own authority, it would have been vain for Him to ask help at their hands. They would not have answered the question candidly in view of the evidence, but as their own fear or ambition should dictate. The absurdity of their proposal was as great as its impudence; as though blind men should ask the artist to let them judge his paintings; as though the merits of a musical performance should be decided by one who cannot tell one tone from another; as though it should be left to those who are breaking all the laws of the land, to say who are good citizens, and who deserving of punishment. Our Saviour refused to submit His doings to any such arbitration; and the self-conceited time-servers were glad to get away from His presence. They saw how totally unfitted they were to canvass the claims of One who was infinitely above their worldly expediency; who was born, and came into the world, that He might bear witness to the truth. What had wisdom to do either with the approval or the

condemnation of those who were not the children of wisdom?

It is because of this human imperfection, from which the best are not wholly free, that the great lesson of charity is urged in the Scriptures. "Judge not, that ye be not judged" is the noble precept in the Sermon on the Mount. "How wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and behold, a beam is in thine own eye?" Christ made the hypocritical priests aware of the beam by which their vision was blurred. How beautiful the spirit of the apostle in his carrying out the instructions of our divine Master! He writes to the Corinthians: "But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment; yea, I judge not mine own self." Only as we are the children of wisdom, having in us the wisdom which cometh from above, are we at all fitted to judge one another; and our perfect faith and joy in Christ are the best proof we can have that this supreme blessing has been imparted to our souls. All the glory and beauty of the divine nature come to us in Jesus of Nazareth. He was God manifest in the flesh. His person reveals to us the loveliness of infinite mercy, the majesty of immutable justice, the great mystery of divine forgiveness and grace. All that is gentle in human intercourse, all that is pure in thought and speech, all the possibilities of tenderness to the poor, sympathy with the sorrowing, forbearance towards wanderers, patience under ill-treatment, serene fortitude amid sufferings, loving efforts to benefit and bless the outcasts of society, shine out in the life of Christ, so as to make any other goodness seem tame and worthless. Do you recognize this

beauty in Jesus Christ? Do you justify His wisdom? Is He your soul's ideal, which you are daily striving to realize? Would you gladly give all that you have, if your great longing to be like Him might be filled? If you might be pure as He is pure? if you might endure the contradiction of sinners as He endured it? if you could turn your other cheek to the smiter as He did when smitten? if you could pray His wondrous prayer, "Father, forgive them," for those seeking your life? If you have the witness in your heart that such is your love, such your longing, such your constant and earnest struggle, then happy are you. This outgoing of your soul after the holy Son of God is that recognition of the divine wisdom which proves you to be a child of wisdom. You have secured the pearl of great price. No spirits may be subject unto you; your name and power in the world may be small, that is; nevertheless you should rejoice, for your name is written in heaven. But, on the other hand, if you see no beauty in Christ; if He is to you a root out of dry ground, having neither form nor comeliness in your eyes, and your soul does not desire Him, does it not follow, by the same necessity as in the other case, that heavenly wisdom has no dwelling-place in you? Here we see just what it was that Christ meant when He said that He came not to bring peace on the earth, but division. He divides men into two classes. His holy and blessed person attracts the good, but it repels the bad. The wise justify Him, but the foolish condemn Him. These, in their succession, make two long ranks running down through the generations, — one on the right hand and the other on the left, between which His throne of judgment is set. There is nothing else for which the true ministers of

Christ watch with so much solicitude as to see how you shall range yourself in reference to these two parties. If you shrink from Christ; if you find fault with His doctrines; if you doubt His authority; if you are ashamed of His service, it proves that you have not the spirit of wisdom dwelling in you. But if you forsake all, and follow Him; if you cleave to His glorious person, hide His precepts in your heart, and make His life the pattern of yours, it proves that the spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. Your answer, therefore, to the question "What think ye of Christ?" has more to do with the revelation of your own character than of His. God is all the time offering this test to men; nor can they escape it; it judgeth every man that cometh into the world.

It is in view of our imperfections, and the erroneous judgments we make, that our minds are pointed on to a day when God shall judge the world. "Judge nothing before the time," said St. Paul; "until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts; and then shall every man have praise of God." But this judgment, so necessary owing to our present wrong estimates of men, is wholly needless to the Judge Himself. He has been dividing between the sheep and the goats all along through the world's history. This separation is known to Him, though concealed from us; and hence that last great day is called, at least in one place, not the judgment itself, but the revelation of the righteous judgment of God. We are so imperfect as constantly to err from that final verdict when we pronounce sentence on our fellow-men. Christ alone, of all who have lived in the flesh, is free from our liability to mistake. He could

say, "My judgment is just; for I do not mine own will, but the will of Him that sent me." Being the Son of God, co-equal with Him, dwelling with the Father from eternity, He knew all that the Father knew. The spirit of holiness and of truth rested on Him without measure. His will was in perfect accord with the Father's; their thoughts and purposes were ever going forth through the same channels. Hence He could anticipate the awards of the last day. He could give a sentence concerning every man, which no verdict of that day would change or reverse. His judgments were prophetic, for He saw the end from the beginning; nor were there any yesterdays or to-morrows to Him, but all the circle of human doings and destiny lay present in the grasp of His infinite mind.

But besides these judicial acts, by which Christ discerns between the righteous and the wicked, are the diverse effects upon men of His revelation to them as the incarnate love. Those who have His own love in them are drawn to His side. If wise themselves, they recognize Him as the embodiment of all wisdom. Not doing this, they betray their own hearts, which are full of a spirit opposite to His. His own sheep hear His voice, and they follow Him. Those who fail to do this are judged by their own doings, showing that He has nothing in them. The child knows its mother's voice, and runs to her when she lovingly calls. Failing to do this, it is counted an alien. When a great magnet is let down among metallic particles, those having an affinity for it spring into contact with it. When the heavier cords of a harp vibrate, the finer strings tremble in unison. So it is when the eternal wisdom comes down to us in the likeness of

men. All the wise are attracted to Him, and the unwise repelled. Our hearty response to His teachings not only justifies Him, but proves that we are the children of wisdom. Leaving men, therefore, to make up their minds as they should see fit concerning Him, He went serenely on His way, doing the will of His Father. It was not Him, but themselves, that they judged. He need not delay to explain His doings or to prove His authority; all the good would be with Him, and if any chose to be against Him, they did so at the peril of their own souls. Their opposition to Him was nothing, save as it stirred His compassion to see the proof of their perverseness. He must work while the day lasted, drawing to Himself such as were to be saved; nor would He waste one moment in refuting objections which could occur only to those blinded by sin. The fact that they asked Him such questions proved that no effectual answer could be given them. It was a new heart that they needed, not clearer instruction as to His claims. Knowledge would not help their case till they had been born again.

Thus did Christ leave His life of love unexplained, to work its own justification in the hearts of good men; and thus, dear friends, are we to leave ours. All our concern should be to be found in Christ; this is that kingdom of God, which if we seek, other things needful will follow in their order. We need not spend half our strength and time trying to make foolish and worldly men comprehend us. They will persist in misunderstanding us. We cannot be understood by them if we are true to our Lord, since they have not the spirit which controls us dwelling in them. We are not like those Israelites rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem, who wrought with one hand and held their

weapons with the other. We may give our undivided strength to the task our Master has set us. No failure or harm can come to us while we are thus engaged. Those who assail us do but put themselves in the way of danger. What they deem a judging of us is a self-condemnation. They are broken by the rock on which they fall, and that same rock, falling upon them, grinds them to powder.

Is it not, therefore, a strong inducement which our subject offers to those not yet in Christ's service, straightway to become His followers? You think His yoke hard, but it is easy. It does not cramp your soul; it unbinds all your nobler powers, and lets them go free. It delivers you from that fear of man which bringeth a snare. It gives you such assurance of union with Christ, and of victory in His name, that you are content to go calmly on, doing what you find to do, regardless of any censures or doubts which your conduct may provoke. Those who oppose you, while you are thus in Christ, do not condemn you but themselves. If they were the children of wisdom, they would justify that wise obedience to the divine will which you steadily show. No true servant of Christ can differ from Him more than John did; yet there was in John that essential oneness with Christ which was all the vindication he needed before men. Rarely have two disciples differed more in temperament, training, opinions, and habits of mind than did Peter and Paul. The first ecclesiastical council of which we have any notice seems to have been with a view to reconciling their differences. They were so unlike as to be unable to labor together harmoniously. Yet each found his place in the kingdom of Christ; one could go to the Jews, the other to the Gentiles. Thus

each was free to preach the gospel in his own way, and develop the type of piety most natural to him, while neither of them distrusted the fidelity of the other, but both alike rejoiced that their peculiarities were used of God for the furtherance of the gospel. So true is it, that if the Son make us free, we are free indeed. Nothing else gives such play and scope to all our ideas of real manliness and independence as the gospel of Jesus Christ. We can scorn to go apologizing through the world, even as Christ did, remembering that wisdom needs no defense, but is justified of her children. No wonder that St. Paul wrote to the Galatians to stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ had made them free. How strange that any should hesitate to come after Him who alone has power to make them the sons of God! Would you have the germs of your manhood take root in good ground? Then make choice of Christ. Are you anxious for the fair maturity of your various powers? Christian discipleship is the air and sunlight which shall cause that harvest to ripen. Christ is made unto us wisdom; and they that are found in Him, not having on their own righteousness, but that which He gives them, are the wise — who shall shine as the brightness of the firmament and as the stars forever and ever.

THE LIMITS OF CHRISTIAN LIBERTY.

But wisdom is justified of her children. — MATT. xi. 19.

THERE is an essential character of goodness, and simple devotion to the will of God, in all Christians, in virtue of which they recognize one another as brethren whenever they meet, however they may differ on subordinate questions. Christ beheld in John the Baptist a true prophet of God, and John beheld in Christ the long-promised Messiah. Those who pretended to be God's servants, but who stumbled at the diverse manners of John and Christ, not recognizing their unity of spirit in obedience to the divine will, showed thereby that they were themselves destitute of that spirit: if they had been the children of wisdom, they would have justified wisdom. Christian discipleship does not cramp individuality. It is a spirit rather than a form. It leaves each disciple free in his manner of life, and teaches that the great company of disciples, throughout the whole world, mutually recognizing themselves as of one mind despite all diversities of manner, will dwell together in love. This individual freedom, in things external and subordinate, is what the apostles call Christian liberty. It was especially insisted on by them, as that which Jewish Christians should concede to Gentile Christians. The former might still practice the Mosaic ritual, if they chose to, since their training as a people made it natural to them; but to the latter it was unnatural, con-

trary to all their habits and traditions. Why should the Jew put his yoke on the Gentile, any more than the Gentile his on the Jew? These matters, in which they so widely differed, did not enter into their essential character as Christians. "We believe," said Peter, who spoke for the Jewish party in the church, "that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they."

But this Christian liberty, of which the text is so suggestive in its connection, has a limit. That limit is what the apostles call "the law of Christ." We must never break this law in the exercise of our freedom; and we never shall break it, if we have Christ's spirit. The law of Christ may be said to be that principle of self-devotion for the good of others which actuated Christ, and by which all His conduct was regulated as a Redeemer and Saviour. Well may it be called His law, for His unselfish life is the first, and the only perfect, embodiment of the idea of self-consecration to the welfare of other men, of which history gives us any account. Many of the names by which Christ is known to us — such as the Sacrifice, the Atonement, our Sin-offering, the Lamb of God slain for us — struggle to express this idea. It is His blood by which we are cleansed from all sin. By His death we live. He laid down His life for us. He was crucified that God might be just and justify him that believeth in Jesus. Christ never looked upon His own things with a view to taking care of them; but He always looked on the things of another, and freely offered up His own for the sake of the other. This was the law of His life; this explains to us the law of Christ. In obedience to this law He laid aside the forms of divinity. Though equal with God, He took

the likeness of our sinful flesh. He made Himself of no reputation. Being found in fashion as a man, He became obedient even unto the death of the cross.

Now in all this humiliation and sacrifice Christ was entirely free. He voluntarily chose to limit His own liberty by a supreme regard for the holiness and happiness of others. He had a right to live as He pleased while in communion with the Father; but that very communion involved the purpose to live not unto Himself. God is love. The energies of His infinite being are all the time flowing out away from Himself in efforts to bless the creatures He has made. The law of Christ, therefore, grows out of the law by which the holy God regulates all His doings; and in placing that law on us, as a rule which we are to observe in the enjoyment of our liberty, Christ but exhorts us to be like our Father in heaven, who makes His sun to shine upon the evil and the good, and sends His rain on the just and the unjust. As the Father sent Him into the world, so hath He sent us into the world. He came freely; and our service is to be without constraint in order to be genuine. He chose to use the liberty which was His by virtue of His divine sonship, in those ways only which would tend to the rescue of lost men and the edification of His tempted brethren; and we, if we be truly His, shall be glad to put ourselves under the same law, — denying ourselves that others may be helped in the struggle with sin and temptation. “Bear ye one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ,” writes Paul to the Galatians. The burdens which He has in mind are human weaknesses and imperfections. Every one has more or less of these. We may take note of them in our brethren, not in a censorious, but in a

kind and sympathetic spirit; may watch over one another, not for our halting, but for our edification. Wherever we see these "burdens," of whatever sort, if we have the spirit of Christ we shall help those oppressed by them to bear their infirmity. We shall not turn coldly or indifferently away; we shall not persist in a line of practice by which our brother's infirmity, taking advantage of what we do, brings him more and more into bondage. We shall obey the law of Christ by freely limiting our individual liberty, as far as may be needful to shield him from temptation or to strengthen him in any efforts he may be making to overcome evil with good.

I understand the apostle to give an illustration of what he means by the law of Christ, when he says: "It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor anything whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak." Self-denials, which may seem to us not only needless for our own good, but in themselves puerile or ridiculous even, may be necessary to the rescue or protection of some other person; for his sake, therefore, we are to submit to them in all joyfulness, even as Christ, for our sake, stooped to that which was so far below the dignity of His infinite glory and person. Where is our warrant that we are the followers of Christ, if we persist in violating this law of Christ? We are free from all those regulations of men by which they seek to shape our manner of life either this way or that; but in the exercise of our freedom we shall, as the Lord's brethren, choose to be under that law which says, "Tempt not thy weak brother, but help him to bear his infirmity." If we refuse thus to let the law of Christ control our Christian liberty, then how can we be said to walk chari-

tably toward our brother, and not the rather to put a stumbling-block before him for whom Christ died? Christ washing the feet of His disciples, if viewed only from the point of His infinite excellency, seems painfully incongruous to our eyes; but if we consider the spirit in which He acted, how sublime the scene! The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister. I am among you as one that serveth. If I, the Master, have washed your feet, ye ought also to wash one another's feet. Not using our liberty for an offense unto any, but in all things striving to deliver and purify and bless our fellow-men, is a principle so essential to the whole spirit of Christianity, that the absence of it, manifested in our daily lives, brings the whole character of our discipleship under grave suspicion. By their fruits ye shall know them. If the seed of the kingdom has been truly sown in our hearts, we shall bear the fruits of the kingdom.

We cannot excuse ourselves from this law of Christ on the ground that our fellow-men have no right to demand it of us in our practice. Most certainly they have no such right. It is every man's duty to make his own peace with God, to escape from evil habits and form good habits, whatever I may do or neglect to do. Each one to whom the gospel is preached is responsible to God for his own soul. The question for you to meet at the great tribunal will be, not whether everybody else was true to you, but whether you have been true to yourself. You have no claim upon Christians for this obedience to the law of Christ, any more than the world had a claim on Christ to die for them that He might take away their sins. Your personal responsibility is not lessened. There is something for you to do in your own behalf, nor must you expect

others to accomplish that work. But though the tempted and vicious and sinful cannot demand this loving service, this denial and sacrifice of self on their account, yet we cannot help rendering it. So mighty was the love of Christ, that *He* could not help becoming a sacrifice for our sins. We may join with Him, laying down our lives for others as He did His; yet there will be enough still for others to do; our sympathy for them will not of itself be effectual to their salvation; and we may devote ourselves for their good in such ways that they shall not be hindered, but stimulated to greater diligence in making their calling and election sure. It is the spirit of Christ which causes us to practice the law of Christ. We live not unto ourselves. Wherever we see suffering, temptation, weakness, struggle with sin, we go at once to the side of the hard-pressed brother; nor can we resist the impulse to take hold with him, and help him turn his defeat into victory, — utterly forgetful of our own individual rights for the time being, so that our Christian liberty finds its most glorious manifestation in the crucifying of ourselves for our brother.

The subordinating of our Christian liberty to the law of Christ, as now explained, has in it one temptation respecting which we need to be on our guard. We are tempted to credit ourselves with a certain superior goodness, in comparison with those for whose sake we practice self-denial. They are weak; we are strong. We stoop to them, that they may rise to us. Our help is needful to them, and we are able to afford them help. Such are the reflections which, if we indulge them, may beget within us a self-righteous spirit. The temptation is to think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think. But the duty of

practicing the law of Christ is very clear, nor can we excuse ourselves from it on the ground of this exposure to spiritual pride. The performance of any Christian duty is beset with temptations. Life itself is a season of trial, — a “probation” the Scriptures term it. Christ, who practiced this law as no one else ever has or can, was meek and lowly of heart. He is eternally conscious of His own infinite rectitude. He has, from the beginning, known the sins and weaknesses of mankind with a perfect knowledge. All the time is He stooping from His own supreme heights of goodness to raise men up out of the deep pit of iniquity into which they have fallen. Yet He is not lifted up in His own thoughts, nor made censorious and harsh; neither doth He despise the most abased of mortals. We are constrained to fear, therefore, that a certain element of hypocrisy must mar our discipleship, if we fall into a vain conceit of our superior goodness, while we think that we are fulfilling the law of Christ. We cannot really begin to fulfill that law, but our outward conformity to it is all a delusion, unless we have the spirit of Christ. That spirit will fill us with meekness; it will clothe us with humility; so that when we have done all we can do, we shall count ourselves unprofitable servants. We shall all the time feel, however great our sacrifices, that the vast debt of love which we owe to all men for Christ’s sake, is still unpaid. We shall abound in the work of the Lord, and strive to fill up what is behind of His sufferings, fearing lest we should altogether fail of any fit token of gratitude to Him who loved us and gave Himself for us. But aside from this amazing fact of the love of Christ, which kept St. Paul from being unduly elated amid his heroic toils and sacrifices for

others, we are to remember that, after all, we are not, in ourselves considered, superior to those feeble ones for whom we deny ourselves. If we differ at all from them, it is God who maketh us to differ. Free grace, unmerited and unsought by us, has come down into our hearts in the power of the spirit, and begotten us from the dead to a lively hope in Christ Jesus. It is not we that live, but Christ liveth in us; and the faith by which we receive this new life is the gift of God. Of ourselves we are nothing. We are of like passions with the worst and weakest of those whom we stoop to help. "But for the grace of God there goes Richard Baxter," in the vilest sinner whom Richard Baxter meets. Hence the touching power of the apostolic argument, "considering thyself lest thou also be tempted." The consciousness of their own fallibility will cause those who are spiritual to restore their erring brother in a spirit of meekness. It is the evil tendencies in our lower nature which we are to crucify for the sake of the brethren. How do we know but that we need to crucify those tendencies for our own sake? Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall. We may be running a risk even in those indulgences which we deem innocent. We may be nourishing habits which, like a poisonous vine, will grow up gradually around us and spread out over our higher nature, killing the divine life in us, and bringing our noblest faculties into the bondage of corruption. We cannot tell but that the flesh may ere long regain its control of the spirit in us, if we give it any occasion. It is better, for ourselves as well as for the tempted about us, that we should bring the flesh into subjection, and keep it under by obeying the law of Christ.

Having now stated the limits within which Christians may innocently differ one from another, even as Christ and John differed, let us return to the fact of the essential oneness of Christians and consider what should be the effect upon them of this. I have already stated, incidentally, that they will mutually recognize this essential oneness amid all their differences as individuals. Passing on, therefore, from this point, let us consider how this grand truth of agreement in Christ should affect the intercourse of different bodies of Christians. I believe that the development of the church of Christ into various denominations is entirely legitimate. The doctrine of world-wide uniformity, in externals, is unphilosophical. All the analogies of nature are against such a conclusion. She teaches, everywhere, that it is by differentiation that development goes forward. Vegetable life unfolds into a variety of plants. Sentient life does not work itself out through a single type, but appears in the almost boundless variety of animal races. It is the church which is one. The denominations, which contain the church under some human, local, or temporal form, may be a thousand or ten thousand. There should be as many of them as are needed, in order that men of diverse civilizations, of different habits and tastes, of varying culture, of disagreeing race-tendencies, of unlike education and refinement, may all find a place into which they can gather in sympathetic bodies, there to express their faith in Christ in such ways and forms as are adapted to their present condition. And if the members of these different bodies are indeed Christians, they will recognize all of like faith not in their own body, and will be drawn into fellowship and coöperation with them. Being the children of wis-

dom, they will justify wisdom, in whatever guise it appears. Christ and John belonged severally to the two great economies, so unlike, which the Bible describes to us. Yet their differences did not keep them from recognizing each other as laborers together. They would not be rivals. Each did his own work as a part of the one comprehensive work which they both were to accomplish. Thus, it seems to me, should the different bodies of Christians work together always. They should admit that their differences, though a comfort and convenience to them, are of purely human and temporal origin. The essential element of the kingdom of Christ not being any or all of these, though expressed variously through them, they should not be erected into barriers in the way of Christian fellowship. Each branch should be ready to recognize all the other branches as grafted into the same vine with itself; and there should be that interchange of fraternal acts and frequent greetings in the name of Christ, and coöperation, absence of unfriendly rivalry, and rejoicing of all over the prosperity of each, which shall prove to the world that they are one in the midst of all their differences. This I believe to be the unity for which Christ prayed at the last supper. All the denominations may continue as they are, or their number may be indefinitely increased, in the Millennium; it is their mutual love, their coöperation, and gladness at seeing one another built up, which shall make them one, and prove that Christ came forth from the Father.

Another effect of this recognition of discipleship in others, by those who themselves have it, is to draw these latter into fellowship with the former. This remark applies to those, hoping they are in Christ,

who are still outside of the church. Perhaps there are some such here to-day. If so, they must see that their state of isolation is not natural. It is contrary to what they must feel to be the secret drawing of their heart. It violates that affinity which faith ever has for faith. If there were but two particles of matter in the universe, and these as wide as the poles of the heavens asunder, they would never rest until they had come into contact and union. So with men, whose hearts have been renewed by the spirit of God. The more conscious they become of the new life in them, the deeper is their longing to be builded together with others of like precious faith. If there were but one band of Christians in all the world, any soul renewed by grace, though on the other side of the globe, would at once be moved to traverse seas and lands, that it might be with them, and share in the tender communion which they have with their ever-living Head. When Paul had passed through his great experience of the second birth, he was not content till he became a member of the little primitive church. He went up to Jerusalem, where he had been a fiery persecutor, and essayed to join himself unto the disciples. But at first they were afraid of him, and would not receive him. Yes, remember, all ye who think yourselves rebuffed by the church on trying to enter it; remember that the great apostle to the Gentiles suffered before you in precisely that way. But he persevered. The spirit of Christ in him would not let him rest till he had entered into the fellowship of Christ's body. Your desire to be in that fellowship, and your persistence in carrying out your desire despite all obstacles, is one of the sweetest evidences you can have that Christ has indeed been formed within you. Nor can

this longing for the society of Christians cease when once you have formally joined yourself to them. It is a fire which nothing can quench. It is a well of water springing up into everlasting life. It will cause you to be glad with David, if you may dwell forever in the Lord's house. It will bring you, not only to the sanctuary with ever-willing feet, but to the room for social conference and prayer. The exhortation to Christians, not to forsake the assembling of themselves together, will be to you one of the most delightful of the divine commands. Though there be but two or three of them, yet meeting, as they do, under the covenants and in the name of Christ, Christ is in the midst of them, as He has not promised to be with any self-isolated disciple; and for His dear sake, if for no other reason, — because you wish to be where He is, and feel the blessing of His presence in your soul, — you will always strive to make one of the little company.

THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST.

Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. —
ROMANS viii. 9.

THERE is something startling in the comprehensiveness of these words. This is the first thing to be noticed. No discrimination is shown in favor of those who wear the decent covering of a Christian profession; who have on the comely garb of religion, and submit themselves to its sacraments and ordinances. The language is indiscriminately spoken. It has reference to those inside, no less than to those outside, of Christ's visible kingdom. "Any man," — you, my Christian brother, or I, as well as he that has never accepted the seals of holy fellowship, we who study the Christian Scriptures, who claim to be Christian households, who come to the table of Christian communion, the managers and pillars of the institutions of the Gospel. These religious symbols and rites and offices make no difference; but if "any man" of us "have not the Spirit of Christ," he is an alien and stranger as really as the open blasphemer. We may consider therefore, that, for this time at least, all conventional barriers — of religious name and profession — are thrown down. The apostolic test of piety comes through all externals; it throws out church-membership, the altar of consecration, the sacramental cup, and baptismal water, — the proprieties of religion, which too many trust in, — and, reducing us all to a

common level, — the level of simple manhood, — it declares that none of us are Christ's who have not a Christian spirit. But not only are these words comprehensive, they are also fair and reasonable. The rule of admeasurement is just, natural, almost inevitable. The branches of any tree are full of the same sap which flows through its stem; and so the genuine disciple is animated by the spirit of his Master. It follows as a matter of course — almost by a natural law — if we are Christ's, that we shall come up to the standard here presented. Not so much by any effort, as by our own sweet and spontaneous will, shall we do this. The connection of believers with Him is vital: He and they constitute one organism, — compared in Scripture to the vine with its branches, and to the body with its members. Now we know, in regard to these instances, that a single life pervades the entire structure. As is the tree, so are the branches. Men do not gather grapes of thorns, nor figs of thistles. No one ever thought of disputing that the same life which keeps the heart a-beating, gives to the arm its flexibility and vigor. These things cannot be otherwise. And for the same reason it is almost needless, one would think, to declare that Christ's people have His Spirit. We say at once, "there is nothing strange in that, but only what we should naturally expect beforehand." The text is so true that it sounds very much like a truism. Of course the followers of Christ will follow Christ; of course if men are Christians they are Christians. As you need not tell us that a thorn-branch never grew on an apple-tree, and as we know without being told that bitter water cannot flow from a sweet fountain; so it is plain enough, being self-evident and after the analogy of nature,

that those who have not the Spirit of Christ do not belong to Christ. A man would try in vain to persuade us that he is a Frenchman, if he cannot speak the French language; or that he is fond of adventure, while he stays carefully at home; or that he is a student of history, if he have no knowledge of what has taken place in the world; or that he is a merchant, if he never buys and sells: and in like manner it is impossible for a man to persuade his brother-man that he is a Christian, — all his protestations and observation of forms passing for nothing, — if he is not moved by the *soul* of Christianity; if he be destitute of that spirit, or principle of conduct, which was characteristic of Christ. We sometimes hear it said of Napoleon, that he was the modern Alexander; by which is meant that the love of conquest was with them both the master-passion. If we should hear a man called the American Howard, that would signify that John Howard's philanthropic spirit animates him. A man is said to be Ciceronian when he writes and speaks in the style of Cicero; Baconian, if he adopts Lord Bacon's method of investigating truth: and so they are Christians — nor can any others be properly thus styled — who show in their lives that disposition of which Christ was the first and forever the most glorious example.

The spirit of Christ — that is, the steady and governing purpose which He embodied in His life — may be uttered in a single word; it was *self-sacrifice*. Though undoubtedly others, before His day, had been moved by this spirit in some faint degree; yet it shows so transcendently in Him that they sink out of sight in the comparison, as the stars are obscured by the sun at noonday. We say that Luther was the

founder of Protestantism, and Wesley of Methodism ; and so we say, reverently and in a far nobler sense, that Christ was the founder of the school of self-sacrifice.

If, then, you wish to know whether a man is a Christian or not, you have only to ascertain whether or not he possesses this quality. It is the distinctive mark of Christian character, the principle of classification, which enables us everywhere to detect God's people. A person who is not familiar with the structure of plants and flowers is apt to classify them according to certain superficial resemblances, such as color and fragrance ; but an experienced botanist, knowing the true grounds of similarity and difference, often makes sad havoc among our hasty generalizations, — separating what we had joined together, and tracing an essential unity where we saw nothing but diversity. So the genuine Christian is not peculiar by anything superficial, such as names and ceremonies. Where we fancy there is great uniformity, looking only on the appearance, Christ might discover real and painful differences. We must go through religious formalities, — creeds and professions assented to with the understanding, all mere seeming, — and search the man's life for this quality of self-sacrifice. The fact of membership in an evangelical church does not make one a Christian, if he be destitute of this quality ; and whoever possesses it in its true and heavenly type is a Christian. “ I have other sheep, which are not of this fold,” is Christ's language to the narrow-hearted disciple ; as the terrible words, “ Not every one that saith unto me ‘ Lord, ’ ‘ Lord, ’ shall enter my kingdom,” are what He says to the presumptuous disciple. When John said to Him, “ Master,

we saw one casting out devils in Thy name; and we forbade him, for he followeth not us," the answer was, Forbid him not; he that is not against us is for us. The sheep and goats are very much mingled together in this world; the wheat and tares grow in the same field, and often so much alike on the surface that it is not safe for us to try to distinguish them; "But the Lord knoweth them that are His." His own Spirit — the spirit of self-sacrifice — is the "image and superscription." He looks through all outward diversities, or uniformities, for this secret mark of discipleship; which was His own grand peculiarity, as it must forever be the one distinguishing element in Christian character.

This self-sacrifice, this mark in the forehead of every true believer, has three elements, — the intellectual, the emotional, the executive; and if either of these elements be wanting in it, it is spurious. (1) The intellectual. He who devotes himself must do this for some worthy object. There is no merit in throwing one's self away. Everything in the history of Christ indicates that He, before deciding to offer up His life on Calvary, took a calm survey of the circumstances. It was not a blind determination: His resolution to die was based on a clear understanding of the good which that death would accomplish. The recovery of the lost children of Adam, opening the prison-doors that a captive world might go free, the means for purifying the fallen generations of men, — this was the great result which the Son of God foresaw that He could achieve by giving His life a ransom, and hence it became Him not to shrink from the mighty offering. We are commanded not to expose ourselves to danger and death needlessly. Any superstitious abuse of self

— such as the papal fasts and penances, the incurring of pain rashly and wantonly — is not pleasing, but abhorrent, in the sight of God. There is reason to believe that what passes current for self-sacrifice often partakes largely of the nature of suicide. He who offers up himself truly, looks forward to the consequences of his offering. He anticipates, after deliberate thought, that his act of self-devotement will glorify God and benefit the world. It is the settled and intelligent conviction that his suffering will increase the general welfare, and that that welfare will not be secured without his suffering, which first moves him to the sacrifice. Curtius, according to the story, leaped into the chasm in the firm persuasion that he should thus save the Roman people. Many a common soldier has made his name glorious by devoting himself to save the life of his general. In every such act we demand this intellectual element, — the foresight of something to be gained which is worthy of the sacrifice. (2) The emotional element. This is essential to the genuine spirit of self-sacrifice. There must be a real sympathy with the fallen in us, or we shall not come down from our high positions to labor amongst them. He who has no pity for lost men, who does not feel for a world lying in wickedness, can never devote himself truly to the work of missions. Cold, impassible natures, men or women who can look with polite placidity on the unfortunate, need most of all to have their hearts developed. Till they learn to imagine themselves in the place of the wretched, remembering them that are in bonds as bound with them, and weeping with them that weep as over a common sorrow, the widest knowledge of this poor world's wants will not fill them with the spirit of

Jesus. Only as they feel how dreadful a thing it is to be a sinner, and how sad a thing to be an outcast from Christian fellowship, — their souls gushing forth in compassion toward the fallen and lonely and helpless, full of susceptibility and tearful tenderness, — only as they thus feel for and with the miserable may we expect to see them overleaping social barriers, crucifying even innocent tastes and prejudices, and patiently bearing bluntness and insult from the very persons they are endeavoring to succor. (3) The executive element. Christ not only saw and felt, but acted. And we shall act in this matter of self-sacrifice, if we are really Christian disciples. As the perception stirs the emotion, so the emotion must move the will, or all goes for nothing. The fig-tree was green and covered with leaves; yet these could not save it, inasmuch as it was destitute of fruit, from the Saviour's malediction. And so we, though we know and sigh over the woes of men, have not the spirit of Christ till we are roused to appropriate action. Our divine Friend beheld and wept; yet not content with this, He came to suffer in our stead: herein was the love, the crowning act and manifestation of the spirit of self-sacrifice. "Show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works," said an apostle. What profit is it, though you say unto a brother or sister, "Go your way, be warmed and filled," if you withhold the needed supply? We may profess great admiration for a self-sacrificing spirit, and say that we love it; but let us have a care that our practice does not belie our words. If you possess the spirit of Christ, devoting yourself as He devoted Himself, your desire to rescue others from evil will not evaporate in mere pro-

fessions. If you cannot suppress the fearful thought that possibly you are not Christ's, if you would be certain that the quality which distinguishes all true disciples is yours, be very careful that your pity for the wretched does not end in mere sentiment; have that readiness to be offered which moves the will, the feet, and the hands in ways of suffering for others; see to it that you can point to your daily walks, — to the matter and manner of your life, — in the humble certainty that a steady and large benevolence, a patient and forbearing love, a brotherly kindness and charity — more persevering the more it is misunderstood, abused, and ungratefully thwarted — are manifest in all your conduct.

Now this analysis, which brings before us the criterion of genuine piety, also furnishes a test of certain deformities of religious character. That large class of persons who are easily affected by descriptions of woe and sin, but who still remain inactive and passive, are deficient in will; they have not the executive element of self-sacrifice. The sight of their eyes affects their hearts, but does not waken in them the resolution to do something. Others again, who are eager to devote themselves, but who rush forward blindly, not pausing to think whether any good result will flow from their sacrifices, show by this conduct that the intellectual element is sadly wanting in them. And others still — who, though they labor much and wisely for the downtrodden, yet do all in so chilling a manner as to repel even by their charities — have not enough of the emotional element. Their good is evil spoken of, and almost inefficacious, because not bathed in an unaffected and brotherly sympathy.

The glory of the Christian life, which we have now

summed up in the one spirit of self-sacrifice, lies in its voluntariness. It is without any external constraint, purely and forever spontaneous. We come not to the altar reluctantly, driven forward at the will of another, but freely, and with love and longing. The old Grecian chief, offering up his beloved child on the eve of his departure for Troy; the citizens of Carthage leading forth the three hundred maidens, a propitiation to the god of war; Jephthah devoting his daughter after the victory over the Ammonites; Isaac going up to the top of Moriah, and permitting himself to be bound and laid on the wood by his father Abraham, — these offerings do not typify, in all particulars, that which is required at our hands. We are to be the priest as well as the victim. It is self-sacrifice. We not only are the offering, but we render the offering. Christ declares that no man took His life from Him, but that He laid it down of Himself. Such is the spirit we shall manifest, if we are truly His disciples. Our sacrifice may not be the same as His in form, but the motive prompting us to it will be the same. We are to present our bodies a living sacrifice for the same reason that He presented His an atoning sacrifice; that is, that God may be glorified, and lost men rescued, through our suffering. It is doubtful if you can ever be in the circumstances where this spirit will not become you; and it is the nature of the exigency that must determine the form of the sacrifice. Your sacrifice may be to exercise patience where you are in haste respecting a good undertaking; to labor hand-in-hand with brethren toward whom you feel a natural antipathy; to deny yourself the pleasure of an angry retort when slighted or insulted; to conquer a personal taste, and put yourself in contact with disagree-

able persons for their good and the honor of Christ's kingdom. Such as these, my brethren, are our crosses, our Calvaries, our Gethsemanes. And as the blessed Lord shrank not from His great sacrifice, but took up the cross, and bore it away without the gate, and there poured out His soul unto death; so we must cheerfully make these sacrifices of convenience, preference, or whatever else we are called to. Otherwise how dwelleth the spirit of Christ in us? what authority or comfort have we in calling ourselves His disciples? Though this grand trait of the Christian appears most striking in those who come down from a lofty position, — in Henry Martyn sacrificing a university life for the missionary life, in John Howard going from his beautiful home into the prisoner's cell, — surpassingly and unutterably resplendent in Him who stooped from the heavenly glory to the earthly shame, — yet none are so weak or lowly but that the same excellence may shine in their character. If the poor and forgotten, — who are never forgotten in the great heart of hearts, — if they would have the spirit of Christ, and so be His, they must crucify their envy and discontent. They must repress the impulse to speak against their more fortunate neighbors. The disposition to criticise; the desire to receive more notice; the temptation to make harsh remarks, and spread injurious rumors, and be shy and suspicious and dissatisfied, — these are the offerings required of not a few, which they must bring together and consume on the great altar of burnt-sacrifice, or they cannot feel sure that they are Christ's disciples. If you think only of the rich and educated and refined, and of the sacrifice demanded from them for your sake, while you read the fearful words of the text, then beware

lest the judgment-day show that you have not the mind of Christ. Those evils and disadvantages at which so many fret are the shapes which your crowns of thorns and humiliations and crosses take on; and to wear them, and submit and suffer, and toil on cheerfully, in such a way as to show the spirit of Jesus, is your portion — often a sublime part — in the carrying out of this law of self-sacrifice.

We are wont to speak disparagingly of self, — its very name having a repulsive sound, — as a thing wicked and monstrous, which ought by all means to be put down and bruised and trodden into the dust. It is a relief, therefore, and a pleasure, to find one connection in which this miserable thing self may be transfigured into something noble and beautiful. It does thus appear on the way to the altar. Only prefix the word self to the word sacrifice, and straightway there is no grander term in the language. We are mean and contemptible till we devote ourselves. The mount of offering is the mount of our transfiguration. The heroes of history — those whom the ages never forget — are just those who have obeyed the holy law of self-sacrifice. This is the spiritual alchemy which wakes death into life; which changes baseness into honor, mortality into immortality, corruption into that which is incorruptible. There is even in us, my brethren, something which the angels admire, — and which is above price in God's sight, — when we go forth willingly bearing our cross. It is the humiliation which exalts us, the shame which covers us with glory, the defeat which is full of victory, the pain and suffering which blossom out into everlasting blessedness. No sooner does God see us on the way to our Golgotha than He is drawn to our side. He cometh

with His Son to abide near us. The prodigal is clothed with garments of beauty. That which was before dark and loathsome now beams with a heavenly lustre. The victim, who is at the same time the priest, goes to the place of sacrifice crowned with garlands, and escorted by angels bearing palm-branches. Once he tried to save his life, and thus daily he lost it; but now he is willing to lose it, and in losing it he finds it. He conquers death in submitting to death. He quenches the light of a selfish life in the blood of sacrifice, and immediately he reappears in the life of holiness, — transformed from the earthly to the heavenly firmament, to shine like a star, and in unclouded brightness, forever and ever.

And oh! that other joy hinted at in the text! Not only ennobled, but Christ's, — His because we have His Spirit; walking in white because we are worthy, and, more than all this, walking with Christ; having Him for our companion because we are in loving agreement with Him! His to lead, — His to defend, — His to comfort and console, — His to instruct, to enrich in all spiritual blessings, to exalt and glorify and crown! This is wonderful riches! an inheritance present and everlasting! an ocean of blessedness which we cannot compass or fathom! And if the glory of belonging to Christ be so unspeakable, who shall describe what it is to be "none of His"? Oh, my hearer, — my brother-man, possibly my brother in the bonds of church-fellowship, — if you are living unto yourself, if you refuse to bear the cross and wear the crown of thorns, let them come in such duties as they may, then strive to comprehend, so far as you can, what it must be to have no portion in Christ. "None of His," in the hour and power of adversity;

“none of His,” when temptations assail you; “none of His,” while your heart is sinking and hope almost expires; “none of His,” when you stand with your feet in the cold river, looking out on its misty billows; “none of His,” in the hour when the throne of judgment is set up, and the children of men are gathered before Him; “none of His,” when He shall say to them on the right hand, “Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.”

PREACHERS, AND WHAT THEY SHOULD PREACH.

The prophet that hath a dream let him tell a dream, and he that hath my word let him speak my word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat? saith the Lord. — JER. xxiii. 28.

I AM glad that I can to-day come before you bringing you this text out of God's word. It shows you, as the whole chapter from which it is taken shows, that certain religious features of our times, which are much complained of by some, are not peculiar to the present age. There were human dreams and theories mingling themselves with the divine messages, chaff together with the wheat, in the days of Jeremiah as truly as now. Then and before that time, and ever since, as now and hereafter until our Lord's second coming, the mental peculiarities of those who formulate and expound and preach the gospel will go along together with the gospel itself, mingling more or less with it, and at times even claiming that they, rather than the words of the Bible which we read, are the gospel. But neither now nor in the future, as at no time in the past, can this human thinking keep the kingdom of God from advancing. The wheat will yield its harvest notwithstanding the chaff. God is willing that the prophet who dreams should tell his dream. Yet it should be kept by itself, as a thing of no special value or authority. The grand facts of His word, as they stand without note or comment on the pages of revelation, are the light and life of men. So

long as these divine facts are clearly distinguished from all theorizing, are preached and insisted upon as the foundation of our faith and practice, it matters little how often we change our theories, or whether we have any theories, concerning them. What is the chaff to the wheat? The earthen vessel does not trouble us while we find the heavenly treasure. Let the human speculation be what it may, while we miss not the word which proceeds out of the mouth of God.

Possibly there is a reference in Jeremiah to men who knew themselves to be false prophets, who did not believe in the prophetic office, who merely made use of it to discredit the facts of the divine revelation. If so, they would correspond to those in our day who are seeking to undermine the whole fabric of the Christian religion. We have a plenty who dream and theorize, and who tell us their dreams as wonderful inventions which have set aside Christianity and taken its place. We shall hardly listen to them, however, while they are so doubtful about what they say, and so unable to agree among themselves, — shall hardly adopt their uncertainties which explain nothing, in place of our Gospel of the Son of God which goes with a healing light into the depths of our consciousness, explaining the mysteries of the soul, and meeting and satisfying our most sacred desires.

It is more likely that the dreamers referred to in the text were those who really had the prophetic gift and believed in it, but who took the messages of God and shaped them according to their own views and feelings before giving them to the people. They did not preach the word of God, that is to say, but simply their own commentary upon it or thoughts about it. They kept God's light from the people, and gave them

the light of their human wisdom in place of it. Now that class of persons in ancient times would correspond to those in our day who take the Bible and theorize about it and frame its truths into logical systems, and who then make their theories and systems rather than the Bible itself the standard of all Christian belief and doctrine. Many of these persons, it should in justice to them be said, do not sink the divine fact out of sight in the human theory ; they keep the two wholly separate in their minds, using the theory among themselves and for purely intellectual purposes, but coming to the simple and plain fact when they would tell men what it is necessary to believe and do in order to please God. There are theologians, full of the spirit of Christ and His gospel, who would be shocked at the idea of preaching their theology as a religious finality. They feel and admit that their theology must be judged by the unvarnished words of Scripture, and they preach those words as the foundation of all faith and practice. This is the loyal position towards the Bible which many theorizers in religion hold, but it is by no means held by them all. Men naturally have a great affection and esteem for what they have themselves thought out. It is according to human nature that the thinking to which one's whole life is devoted should get to be to him of all things in the world the most important. This is the result of what we call professional enthusiasm, without which no signal success is ever achieved. Every young person should feel that his daily business in life is an important thing in the community, or he will not put his whole energy into it. So the author or the poet, having published his work after long months of devoted toil, often has a regard for it which he is mortified to find the public

does not share. So the artist, finding no admirers of his pictures or statues, takes refuge in misanthropy. Such is the tendency of men in whatever they do with enthusiasm; and those who theorize about the teachings of the Bible have as much of it as any others. The speculative systems which they have framed to meet intellectual wants, and which are not for our spiritual guidance so much as for debate and controversy, come, after years of thinking, to be very dear to them. They mingle their chaff with God's wheat; hide the wheat in the chaff. The human dream gets so mixed with the divine word as at length to usurp its place in the thought of the dreamer, and he feels that all men who do not speak his shibboleths are heretics, and ought to be cast out of the church. Such is the very natural origin of much religious persecution, of those divisions about so-called doctrinal matters which always have and will yet, we know not how long, distract the church. These human theories have grown so overshadowing at times, and have so wholly usurped the place of the simple gospel, that not a few good men have seriously questioned whether the study of technical theology be not on the whole an evil. Some of the most useful Christians of our times cannot be brought to regard theological schools with any complacency. I think they are wrong, yet they do not speak wholly without cause. They can point to the days when there were no such schools, and show that those days were among the brightest in the history of the church. They can point to men never in such schools who are foremost in advancing our Lord's kingdom. They have on their side the fact that many candidates for the Christian ministry come out of those schools loaded down with theory, which spoils them for any

effective service till they get clear of it and learn to make the plain words of the Bible their weapons. This deliberate and intentional exalting of human theory into the place of divine truth is, of course, not to be confounded with that unconscious tinge of his own personality which every one must give to what he utters. Though you and I should teach essentially the same thing, yet your teaching will have something of you in it, and mine will have something of me in it; and so far as that goes, our teaching will differ. I believe lawyers say that no two witnesses ever yet testified precisely alike. One sees the same fact differently from another. There is this unconscious and necessary variance running all through the Bible. It is one of the charms of the volume, and a testimony to the simple honesty of the writers. The peculiarities of authorship in each of the four gospels go to prove the genuineness of them all. St. Paul repeatedly alludes to this element in his epistles, and intimates that at times he may have been too much under its influence. He tells his brethren that they are not bound by his opinion when he speaks from himself, but only so far as he speaks from the Lord Jesus and from God. He and James and Peter did not write precisely alike upon some of the great themes of the gospel. Modern theorists, who are at swords' points with one another, have tried to make it appear that those apostles were in as sharp conflict as they are. But the wish was father to the thought, and they have not succeeded in their profane attempt. Very different from the bitter strifes and debates, in which they are all the time fiercely anathematizing one another, were those unconscious variations of statement by the inspired apostles, who cared little for their own refine-

ments upon the gospel, and gave themselves heart and soul to the work of spreading it throughout the world.

I have now reached a point in my remarks, dear friends, at which I can properly say something which seems to me very important to be said at the present time. I fear that many persons among us are getting very wrong impressions in regard to many ministers and other teachers of religious truth, and are settling down into the conclusion that there is not much real and hearty belief of the Bible anywhere. No impression could be more false. I believe that the gospel, as inspired men gave it, was never more firmly held or faithfully preached than now. "But what mean these rumors which are filling the air?" perhaps you ask. It is said that many doctrines which the whole church has been understood to hold hitherto are now in doubt, and that the men who gravely doubt them are filling our most prominent Christian pulpits or chairs of instruction. Dear friends, I wish to put in a word for these co-laborers of mine, and to assure you that you have not the least cause to be disturbed about the foundations of the truth. "Every little while," you say, "some student from the theological school is found so loose in doctrinal views that he cannot get a license to preach the gospel, or some pastor-elect is rejected by an ecclesiastical council, or some one who is publicly branded a heretic says he gets a great many private letters and words of approval from the very party of those who denounce him." There are articles in the newspapers, and magazines and reviews, which broadly intimate that the writers have had much talk with preachers, and that congregations would be very much astonished if ministers should come into their pulpits and honestly and frankly preach just

what and only what they really believe. Now, this sweeping charge of hypocrisy, concealment, and deceit in the pulpit does strike us at first view as indeed formidable. But I do not think, dear friends, that you have the least occasion to be made uneasy by it. I think it can all exist, and be very easily accounted for, and your pastors nevertheless be as true and faithful preachers of the gospel as the church has ever had. I know of no change in regard to the gospel among evangelical ministers, except that they love it with a more intense devotion, and with a stronger purpose to know nothing else, the longer they preach it. If there has been any change among them in regard to speculative or theological teachings, I believe it is largely due to this very devotion. They are learning to recoil from that whole body of human doctrine which threatens to displace, and sometimes has displaced, the saving words of Christ and His apostles. This is the head and front, the beginning and the end, of their offending. They do not think as much of theories of the gospel and speculations about it as they once did, and they are ready to say so either publicly or privately. And certainly this is no reason why distrust concerning them should be sown among you, as though they were only a set of hypocrites who for the sake of their places and the small stipends they receive are teaching you what they no longer believe. They never before believed what they teach more fully and earnestly than they now do. If they have changed in any of their views, that change has not carried them away from but nearer to the gospel. They have departed to the faith once delivered to the saints, not from it. They are thinking more of the divine word and less of the human dream; more of the wheat and less of the

chaff. It has been freely charged, for instance, that but few Christian ministers now hold the Scriptural doctrine of retribution for sin. But I believe they were never more eager to accept just what the Bible says on this whole subject, and abide by it, than now. It is not the Bible which they refuse to accept, but human theories born of philosophy and metaphysics. Scholastic thinkers, in ages of fierce religious controversy, have formulated their own partial and distorted views of this subject into standards which the hard-pressed church has for the time being accepted. To refuse to abide by those extravagant human standards is a very different thing from refusing to abide by the Bible. I think you will all agree with me in the statement that such a doctrine of retribution should be preached to the wrong-doer as will most tend to make him stop his wrong-doing; that nothing should be said to him about his future, either in this life or that to come, which will encourage him in his evil courses. That statement you are all ready to accept; and it certainly covers everything the Bible has to say on the subject, however it may disagree with what speculative thinkers and polemics have said. Or take the opposite doctrine of grace. It is charged that ministers do not hold the doctrine of gratuitous salvation, sovereign, foreordained, wrought out in fulfillment of an eternal decree, regardless of merit or character in the persons saved. Well, where is any such doctrine of grace as that, with no counterbalancing doctrine, taught in the Bible? To hesitate to accept it is not to go back from Christ, but go back to Him. If I should say that every man, however good, still needs to be a disciple of Christ, and that every man, however bad, is sure to be saved if he fully

and heartily trusts in a crucified Redeemer, you all could admit such a statement ; but that is substantially the Bible doctrine of free grace. Admit, as you must, that nothing should be said to the sinner to encourage him in his sin, and everything to the believer to encourage him in his believing, and you admit the essence of all the Bible has to say on this solemn twofold subject of retribution and redemption. Now what your acquaintance may be I know not, but my own intercourse with Christ's ministers has assured me that these two doctrines, or rather this double doctrine, this great truth of truths in the whole Bible, was never more firmly held or faithfully preached than at present. Thus I might go on through the whole list of doctrines which the church of Christ is supposed to hold. Not one of them, so far as I have found, has been given up in its Bible form, at least by the ministers of our own religious order and faith. I think you will find them all heartily believed and faithfully preached, wherever you find religious teachers who hold that the Bible, the whole Bible and nothing else, is the life and light of men. And the ministers of to-day, in taking this position, do but place themselves where the early New England churches stood ; for in their famous Confession of 1680 is this golden article : " The supreme judge, by which all controversies of religion are to be determined, and all decrees of councils, opinions of ancient writers, doctrines of men and private spirits are to be examined, and in whose sentence we are to rest, can be no other but the Holy Scripture delivered by the Spirit, into which Scripture so delivered our faith is finally resolved." No, my dear friends, you who are neglecting your personal duty on the whole subject of reli-

gion, you can find nothing among ministers of the gospel in our evangelical churches to encourage you in such neglect. They do not doubt; they do not hesitate; they are not uncertain. They will all say to you, as St. Paul said to the men of his day, "I know whom I have believed." If there be any exceptions, they are the eccentric, the weak, the hare-brained, whose opinion on this subject should have no weight with you, as it would have none on any other matter of importance.

Some of the sublimest and most awful truths of the Bible are not so much taught in it as taken for granted. The existence of God, the immortality of the soul, the fact of moral obligation, human sinfulness, and the need of a ransom in order to escape punishment for sin, are all truths of natural religion. They are written on our hearts. We bring them with us into life. We should believe in them though we had never heard of Christ and His salvation. The conceptions which many tribes have of these truths are very vague, owing to long centuries of ignorance and superstition and debasing habits of life. But though they only slumber in the soul, and fill it with frightful or fantastic dreams, they are never wholly absent from it. They are "truths which wake to perish never." Our blessed Lord, and His inspired servants both before and after Him, pour a fresh light in among these truths. They bring them out of the confusion and darkness in our own minds, and set them clearly before us in forms which the highest reason accepts. And not only do they thus deal with these grand primal truths which they find already in us, but they bring others not in us, — truths more wonderful, more majestic, which we do not naturally

know, and but for which those which we do know would be to us an inheritance of anguish and despair. What can be more terrible than to be forced to believe in a holy God whom we cannot escape, and with whom we are wholly unfitted to commune? What more terrible than to know that we are immortal, while we feel within us the gnawing of the worm which also never dies? What more terrible than to find that we are sinners, and be left with no knowledge of the forgiveness of sin? What more terrible than the fact of moral obligation, while our conscience is all the time telling us that we fail to heed it as we should? You will be ready enough to accept the atoning cross, and the washing of regeneration, and the life of God in the soul which is by the faith of Jesus Christ, when you once find yourself standing face to face with all the secrets of your own heart. It is the beliefs which you already have which destroy; it is the truths which our Lord Jesus brings which comfort, which give hope, which deliver and save. All these truths, both those which you have and those which you need, were, I assure you, never more generally and fervently held than now. Never before as at the present day do men go against the deep convictions, not only of the ministers of the gospel, but of all Christendom, who are unwilling to come after our glorious Redeemer and be His disciples.

An adequate religious creed, such as all men everywhere stand in need of, and which should be constantly preached, I hold to be one which teaches that we are by nature the children of God, made such by the breathing of His spirit into man at the beginning; which teaches that this divine nature in us has gone away from God into bondage to the lower nature, and

is living a life of death in worldliness and sin, where it must forever feel the pains of death if it be not delivered back into its original life and freedom; a creed which teaches that the cross of Calvary stands between the believing sinner and any sense of ill-desert which he may have; which teaches that Jesus Christ was very God in such a sense that we need not fear to trust our whole spiritual destiny for time and eternity in His hands. The adequate creed, the blessed, undistorted theology of the Bible, never more held and preached than now, teaches that men may, by loving and serving their glorified Saviour, have spiritual life, and strength and power to live godly lives in Him, given unto them; it teaches that, denying worldly lusts, we should live righteously in the world; it teaches that, ceasing any longer to try to settle questions which are too high for us, we should be holy and harmless, separate from sinners, looking for our Lord's glorious coming, and struggling to spread His kingdom of peace and joy throughout the world. This creed, and the truths and lessons divinely connected with it, or which naturally grow out of it, is what neither you nor I, dear friends, should ever turn away from. It is our sheet-anchor amid the rocks and shoals of time. It is the hand of our God let down to us, and steadying us forward while we trustingly hold to it along the Alpine paths in our journey. You know how the Bible speaks of the terrors of death. But what, as it also shows, are the terrors of death to the terrors of life? Let life be shorn of its terrors, and death will have no terrors; it will be an angel of light welcoming us into everlasting peace. Life throws forward, out of its own mystery of evil, that shadow which we misname the

night of death. It is terrible to live, to be the child of God, to be immortal and full of divine possibilities, to walk the narrow and slippery causeway of time, to see the hideous faces and forms of temptation rising up towards us out of the great deep on either side; to stumble, to slip, to fall is so easy; it is so easy to be startled and affrighted, to make a misstep, to go over on one side or the other and be forever swallowed up. God forbid, dear friends, that any of us should ever be found walking in this demon-thronged path alone, or attended only by the devices and speculations of our fellow-men! There is but One who can guide us aright. There is but One who can hold us up. What is the chaff to the wheat? Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.

RELIGIOUS CREEDS.

Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. — 2 TIM. i. 13.

Do these words refer to a brief summary of Christian doctrine which was in existence in the time of the apostles? It is very natural to suppose that they do. The apostles could hardly succeed in their efforts to build up churches without such a summary of the doctrines which they taught. What they taught was new and strange to their hearers, nor could they remain long in person with any of the churches which they founded. They were going from city to city. In their long absences, having committed a church to the care of some wise and prudent man styled a bishop or overseer, it is but reasonable to presume that they would leave behind them, for the guidance of the church and its pastor, a clear statement of the truths of the gospel. How else could they be sure that the way of salvation in Christ would be properly taught? or that all the churches, in various parts of the world, would be essentially one in doctrine? We can hardly avoid the conclusion that there was something, in all the churches which they gathered, answering to what is now called a church creed. And admitting that there was such a creed for the use of the church at Ephesus, we readily see the reference of the apostle when he exhorts Timothy to "hold fast the form of sound

words." The existence of a creed, either written or committed to memory, readily accounts for other scriptures besides our text. In the First Epistle to Timothy, St. Paul denounces a class of teachers who "consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness. And in the fourth chapter of the Second Epistle he rebukes those hearers of the gospel who will not endure sound doctrine, but after their own lusts heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; who turn away from the truth, and are turned unto fables. How could he refer to heresies at Corinth and among the Galatians, or how could Peter denounce those who bring in "damnable heresies," if there were no fixed standard by which it might be known what heresy was? These are but a few of the passages which seem to take for granted the existence of such a standard. And though no separate creed-form, unmistakably drawn up by the apostles, has come down to us, yet there are several passages in the epistles which read very much like a creed, — brief and clear statements of the great truths which Christ and his apostles taught. A creed which is simply Christian and not sectarian is one containing facts and truths held in common by all Christ's followers. Apart from the Bible, which is itself a creed in a certain large sense, the nearest approach we have to an unsectarian creed is perhaps the Apostles' Creed, so called, though this is open to objection, as I may show further on. Our forefathers here in Boston, who drew up the creed still preserved in this church, seem to have thought they were following the example of the apostles, and even of Christ, in what they did; for they say, in the preface to their work,

“The Lord Jesus Christ witnessed a good confession at the time when he said, To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. And He taketh notice of it, to the high praise and commendation of the church in Pergamos, that they held fast His name and had not denied His faith.’ We find how ready the apostle was to make a confession of his faith, though for that hope’s sake he was accused and put in chains.”

If asked what the truth was to which Christ witnessed, we may reply that evidently the great thing which He confessed was, that He was the appointed Saviour of the world. Nothing could tempt Him to deny that He was the Son of God, and He everywhere insisted that there was salvation only for those who were His disciples. This was substantially His confession in the synagogue, when He read from the prophet Isaiah, and said, “To-day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.” As John the Baptist denied not, but confessed, saying, “I am not the Christ,” and pointed to Christ, saying, “Behold the Lamb of God,” so Christ Himself confessed, saying, “I am the Way, the Truth and the Life; my Father and I are one; my Father hath sent me into the world, that the world through me might be saved; he that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life, but he that believeth not on the Son shall not see life.”

The nearest approach to this confession, which was our Lord’s faith concerning Himself, is the declaration of Peter, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” This creed or confession shows us what Christ regarded as the doctrinal basis of His church; for He said to Peter, “Upon this rock will I build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against

it." The confession of Christ as a divine Saviour seems to have been the condition, and so far as appears almost the only condition, of membership in His church throughout the apostolic times. The Ethiopian whom Philip baptized said, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." When the jailer at Philippi asked what he should do to be saved, the reply was, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." As a full faith in Christ involved belief in the fact of His resurrection, this fact came gradually to be added. Thus in the tenth of Romans, in a passage that reads very much like a creed-form, St. Paul says, "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." The Jewish portion of the church tried for a time to add more or less of their own ritual to this confession. But at a general council of the church held in Jerusalem it was decided, while they were left free to practice their Mosaic rites, that no such burden should be laid on the Gentiles. The Pauline doctrine of faith in Christ was declared to be enough for them, provided they would abstain from idolatry and certain other pagan usages. The faith or doctrine which the apostles required all Christians to accept was sometimes called the mystery. Hence we read in one place, "Great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory."

These words, in their thought and their structure, bear a resemblance to the Apostles' Creed, so called, — a confession which has been brought to your notice for a few Sabbaths past. Some Christian scholars

hold that this creed was drawn up by the apostles themselves, whence its name. But I do not find in it this inspired authority, at least in its present form. Additions were certainly made to it several centuries after the death of the apostles; and its name is of small historical importance, since this might have been first given it long after it had begun to be used. But it is a remarkably scriptural creed, and remarkably comprehensive. Even those phrases in it which some of us are now a little slow to accept, recall certain words of the Bible. This creed is found, in its earliest forms, in the writings of Irenæus and Tertullian, who speak of it as a summary of Christian doctrine well known in their day. They lived in the next century after the apostles, were personally acquainted with those who had seen the beloved disciple John; and it is certain, therefore, that this creed, in its most ancient forms, is more than fifteen hundred years old. It was in use among the churches before the books of the Bible were gathered into a single canonical volume. Tertullian and Irenæus do not give it in precisely the same words. Its phraseology was changed by different writers. But during the fourth century it took the form which it now has, with certain exceptions which I will note. The phrase, "He descended into hell," is not in it; and instead of saying, "I believe in the holy Catholic Church, the Communion of Saints," it says simply, "I believe in the holy church." It says, "I believe in the resurrection of the body," but does not add what we now have, "and the life everlasting." This last phrase we all no doubt consider a great improvement, though, with the others referred to, it was added several centuries later. We are glad to say that we believe in "the life everlasting;" and I see not why

we should hesitate to say that we believe in "the resurrection of the body." To deny that doctrine is to put ourselves against the obvious import of Paul's writings on the subject. He declares that Christ, in rising from the dead, became the first-fruits of them that sleep in Him; and we are so identified with Him that if we say, "our bodies rise not," we deny His resurrection. When our minds are troubled by scientific doubts, or what seem to us natural impossibilities in the way of this doctrine, let us remember that nothing is too hard for God. All is easy in view of His omnipotence. We may not know yet just what the body is to which Paul refers; and at any rate we can always say to the doubter, as he said to king Agrippa, "Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?"

So also the phrase, "He descended into hell," though easily misunderstood, is not unscriptural. The word "hell" here does not refer to that place of punishment which is the abode of the devil and his angels, but to the unseen world into which all depart, whether good or bad, when they quit the body. It is not a place of banishment from God's presence, for the Psalmist says, "If I make my bed in hell, thou art there." Christ's spirit might be in this common realm of all the dead, and yet He might say with literal truth to the thief on the cross, "This day shalt thou be with me in Paradise." We should never forget, when we read such texts as these, that the attribute of omnipresence belongs to Christ. The Bible accommodates itself to our finite thought when it speaks of Him as descending, or as ascending up into heaven. We cannot go from His presence. If Christ himself says to God, as represented in the Messianic psalm

quoted by Peter at the time of Pentecost, "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell;" and if, in his first epistle, he says that Christ, though put to death in the flesh, was quickened in spirit, and went and preached unto the spirits in prison, we certainly ought not to stumble at the words in the creed. Yet I am free to say that I wish the words were not there; for we do not always have their scriptural meaning before us when we read them, but are misled by certain false views which cause them to make a wrong impression.

Not only did the most ancient form of the creed lack this objectionable phrase, but it said, "I believe in the holy church," instead of saying, as we now do, "the holy Catholic church." There is but one church, Christ's mystical body, the whole company of true believers in all the world and throughout all time, of whatever name. It is indeed the Catholic Church; that is, the church of the whole. It is not Papal, it is not Episcopal, it is not Presbyterian, it is not Congregational. It is catholic, the communion of saints, the one mighty fellowship in Christ of all those who believe on His name. But the word "Catholic" has a conventional use, by which it means simply "Papal or Romish" to many minds. We are so inclined to give in to this false application of the word, thereby favoring errors which in our hearts we abhor, that I should wish to go back to the ancient form of the creed, dropping from it this ambiguous word, if we were to have it in permanent use. With these abatements, the Apostles' Creed is truly a marvelous summary of the things most commonly believed among us. It is grand in its simple diction, and in the stately rhythm of its sentences. It is mellow with the light of fifteen centuries. It is a noble confession which

every true believer is ready to make, and which we all should be glad to know from our earliest years.

I will not here detain you to speak at length of other creeds. You know what the most important of them are. There is the Nicene Creed, — sometimes called the Athanasian, because it was largely the work of Athanasius. This creed was adopted by a council of the church at Nicæa, and afterwards confirmed and more particularly defined by a council at Constantinople, in the latter part of the fourth century. It continued to be the doctrinal basis of the church until the time of Luther. It was aimed against the heresy of Arianism, and affirms with special emphasis the doctrine of the Trinity, and the supreme divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ. The creeds at the time of the Reformation, which were elaborated at great length, reaffirmed those which had gone before, besides uttering strong protests against the errors of the Papal church. We know the substance of these creeds chiefly through the Westminster Confession, — more studied a century ago than now. The Boston Confession, which was adopted in 1680, and which is the doctrinal basis of this church, may be regarded as one of the historic creeds of the Protestant churches.

It is common in these days to hear a great deal said against the use of creeds. But some of you have seen during the last fifty years, and we all see about us to-day, how swift the descent to religious indifference and to open infidelity is, where positive statements of Christian doctrine are neglected.

1. Such creeds are a safeguard against error. Having learned them in early childhood, and knowing that they contain the substance of the gospel, we are not deceived by new forms of error constantly spring-

ing up around us. Theories claiming to be the gospel, but really opposed to it, do not mislead our minds. As good business men have their familiar tests by which they detect adulterations and counterfeits, so we have, in a Christian creed thoroughly learned and faithfully applied, a ready test by which we may distinguish all false gospels from the true. We know what human doctrines to accept and what ones to reject. We can tell the movements in society about us which are opposed to Christ, and those which are a development of His kingdom.

2. It is needful to our self-respect that we hold some positive religious belief. Indecision makes a man weak, suspicious, untrustworthy. We do not know to-day where we shall find him to-morrow. There is no class of persons whom we more avoid than what are called uncertain persons. No one ever feels quite sure of them ; and seeing that they are distrusted by others, they cannot wholly trust themselves. Our use of that colloquial phrase, "on the fence," shows how we forfeit all title to respect by being without clear and pronounced beliefs.

3. A Christian creed, embodying the essential truths of the gospel, is all-important for purposes of instruction. Go into communities where such creeds are unknown, and you find but little clear and definite knowledge of religious truth. What you do find is fragmentary, superficial, inconsistent with itself. This loose and vague way of dealing with Christian doctrine affects all departments of thought. There is sure to be intellectual degeneracy where the careful training of the young on religious subjects is neglected. It stimulates the mind to hold a positive faith ; to stand pledged to something which we feel

bound to defend, which obliges us to search the Scriptures, for the universal acceptance of which we toil and pray.

4. But for the germ of all these creeds we must come back to the words of Peter, and to the spirit of loving trust which filled his heart when he said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." That belief in the blessed Son of God which leads you to consecrate yourself to His service is the confession of faith which He asks at your hands. Without this, any others which you may bring are of no avail. But having this, and following the impulses of the Spirit in your hearts, you will be led from faith to virtue, and from virtue to knowledge, and from knowledge to charity; and all the fruits of godliness shall be in you and abound in your lives.

THE BLESSEDNESS OF LIVING.

It is not a vain thing for you, because it is your life. — DEUT. xxxii. 47.

THESE words announce a truth which our minds are unapt to entertain or even recognize; we love to contemplate the blessings of life, but seldom consider that life itself is a transcendent blessing. While students of nature have bewildered themselves with trying to give a scientific definition of life, and the mass of men have regarded it as a boon or an evil according to its allotments, the Scriptures admonish us that it is one of the greatest gifts which the "Father of lights" bestows on His children. Whether we believe, with some, that it is the same thing as electricity; that it does not differ from the principle of heat; that it is nothing more in man than in the inferior creatures; whether we vainly attempt to grasp and analyze it, or confess, with the wisest of thinkers, that it is a mystery baffling all science, — yet he who can say, "I have lived," should not pretend that he has no occasion for thanksgiving. Simply to exist as a human being; to feel this vitality streaming and flashing through one's frame; to have this power of thought and affection, these longings and hopes and heavenly ideals, though it be in feebleness, obscurity, and suffering, — are an inheritance not to be despised, but gratefully owned and guarded.

Notwithstanding what stoicism has feigned respecting the nobleness of suicide, admiring the deaths of Cato and Seneca, we feel that there is justice in the

instinct which denies to such the honors of Christian burial. Where reason has succumbed to disease, thus rendering the sufferer irresponsible for his actions, no feeling of blame can arise in any heart; but he who knowingly undervalues the gift of life, who habitually despises it, and professes for it a deliberate contempt, even though he should not toss it back to the Giver as a trifle not worth possessing, betrays dullness of comprehension no less than an unthankful spirit. There are blessings more precious than life, as the battlefields of liberty, the scaffolds of Christian discipleship, and the cross of salvation may evince; but so far from implying that life is valueless, we assume its vast worth and importance by choosing it as the final thing to be weighed against freedom, truth, and redemption. The sacred writers often depict in a very striking manner the shortness and uncertainty of life: but all such descriptions, plainly, instead of lowering only heighten our ideas of its value; for why admonish us of the loss of that which is of no consequence? Our life on earth may seem a small thing in comparison with our immortality, as every finite object, however grand, must sink into insignificance when placed beside what is unmeasured and illimitable. But while reading "Better were it for that man if he had not been born," we perceive that bare life is classed among the very chiefest of human blessings; and as we listen to Moses in his last charge to the Israelites, exhorting them to obedience, and saying, "It is not a vain thing for you, because it is your life," the simple permission to live, however unblessed and unhonored one's life may seem, stands towering and shining before us among the choicest favors which all-accomplishing Love can bestow.

That the bare fact of our existence, whatever its limit or allotments, is a boon for which we should render our Creator never-ceasing thanks, will appear upon due reflection.

1. Every human life involves a certain royalty and dominion. We may lose the consciousness of this lordship, and for the most part do, by forgetting the divine order of the world. There is a kingly authority with which men sometimes invest a fellow, or which he may force them to recognize; and this has so filled our thought as to render us careless of the empire which God confers. No life is so humble, or so confined in its operation, but the difference in dignity between it and the most illustrious chieftain is too small to be computed. That crown bestowed by the impartial Father upon all, has a brightness which no special exaltation can overshadow or bedim. It is the highest glory of a man to make good the possibilities of his own nature; to defend those imperial honors which are his birthright; to comprehend and worthily wear the royalty which his very being involves. That sovereignty on earth which approaches nearest to God's is not outward and formal, but in the soul of man. It is a necessity, and its ground is in the faculty of freewill. Every man is, by virtue of his creation, the absolute lord of a kingdom. He cannot vacate that dominion, save at his peril, until it is terminated by death. It is a trust with which he should allow nothing to interfere, and which he will be required to render back when God calls.

This empire is partly outward, but for the greater part within the man himself. The command to have dominion over external nature does not limit our prerogative: we have other and weightier prescriptive

rights. Though unskilled in the management of natural forces, though we have never discovered nor applied any law of matter, nor achieved aught tending to increase man's lordship over the world, yet there is a realm in which we may reign supreme. What is the world of sense to the world of spirit? "What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" One may bid the stars conduct vessels across the sea; another may yoke the steam and the lightning for our service; on every side of us there is a scientific conquest of the outer world going forward, in which we may be unable to share, — discoveries and inventions to which only the highest human genius is equal: yet these triumphs, in which so few can participate, do not eclipse the dignity which is common to us all. We are not thereby discrowned, for the inner kingdom still remains. The host of susceptibilities and impulses, the intellectual forces which range through two eternities, the high spiritual capacities grasping infinity, — these are an empire for the feeblest will, in which it may wield undisputed control. "Greater is he that ruleth his own spirit than he that taketh a city," we read; and this is no hyperbole, or flight of rhetoric, but a literal truth, founded on the intrinsic worth and grandeur of the soul. Every one who enjoys the life of probation is set over that vast inner realm. Though his way outward should be hedged up on all sides, and poverty and pain be his bitter lot, yet his life is no vain thing. It involves a royalty so glorious that the least undervaluing of it, or effort to cut it short, is a wickedness and a shame. It is still a gift calling for gratitude, — a trust of unspeakable meaning, which one should sacredly and reverentially hold.

Have any of us proved false to this kingdom? Does conscience testify that our will has yielded up the throne of righteous dominion in the soul? Are our spirits the seat of anarchy and confusion, — the will in subjection to lower propensities, floating hither and thither on their reckless tide? This, instead of lowering, exalts the blessing of life. It is an opportunity to regain our lost dominion. And what nobler object can a man propose than to gain a victory over himself? It is the conflict with indwelling sin, and the purpose to conquer every wayward faculty, which draws upon us, even from Heaven, looks of admiration and love. There is no sublimer thing on earth than a soul resolving to bring all its impulses into subjection to the law of Christ, saying, “I will recover the kingdom which I have lost; I will reascend the throne which my evil nature enticed me to forsake; appointed to rule this immortal spirit and these limitless desires, God’s greatest work, I will no longer be kept from my high vocation. These riotous passions shall be controlled; this uprising selfishness and self-love shall be put down; nor will I ever give over the battle while there is one thought or wish left to exalt itself against my holy determination.” It is for the soul thus resolving that Christ was manifested, died, and now intercedes. If not a spectacle to men, it is to the angels. And the Holy Spirit is with it alway, helping and cheering it through the long warfare. Who shall say that it is not blessed to live, though destitute of all superadded benefits, while thus toiling and thus attended, urging our way out of the gulf into which sin has cast us, and having our eye fixed on the kingdom and crown of a reinstated manhood?

2. The opportunities of service which every life in-

volves, constitute a weighty trust. Though no fellow-man nor any department of nature should be brought into subjection to us, and though the consciousness of dominion in our own souls should be denied, yet there are a thousand ways in which we may be serviceable and helpful. To be thus useful is a nobler and more Christ-like aim than that just considered. "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister." To aid our brother-men — lightening their burdens, cheering and supporting them through temptation — is the worthiest object in living. It likens us to God, who is the servant of all, from archangels down to the smallest worm and insect. In doing this servants' work it is that our self-conquest and royal position are secured. We must reign as God reigns, who is the blessed potentate because "His tender mercies are over all His works." Our dignity and perfection are an incidental result, a reward given little by little while we walk in the footsteps of our all-sacrificing Master. None are so weak but something weaker appeals to them for protection. It is a maxim in political economy, that whoever makes two blades of grass grow where but one grew before, is a benefactor of mankind. Every foot of surface rescued from the encroaching sea, every acre of waste land subdued to the plow and the scythe, are a contribution to the welfare of the race. Only let each laborer perceive how his toil enters into the sum of human achievement, and none can say that it is a vain thing to live. There is no unproductive class but idlers. The riches which vulgar avarice has heaped up will in due time be gathered by some wise master, and become the instrument of virtue and Christian progress. "No man liveth unto himself." The Church of the

Redeemer is not in haste, but calmly "bides her time," knowing that the honor and glory of the nations shall be brought unto her. As sure as there is a God, all things have been made for justice; and though men may seek to check or divert them, here and there, they move steadily toward their high destination. Human activities, whether good or evil, are the chariot wheels of Divine Providence; they roll the world onward nearer to that perfection and blessedness which await it.

Wherever our lines of duty have fallen, this truth should be the inspiration of our labors; it should hush the voice of murmuring. The coral insect toils on beneath the waves, all unconscious that it is building the fruitful island, or laying the foundation of the vast mainland. But it need not be so with us. Gifted with that wondrous faculty of reason which enables us to trace the future in the present, we may know, while buried in the depths of obscurity, that our work is a service to mankind; we may foresee every earnest blow and every honest word helping to make that new heaven and new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness. Why despise that life, esteeming it a vain or small thing, which is full of such far-reaching possibilities? What wisdom in the scripture which bids us "cast our bread upon the waters," and "sow our seed in the morning, and in the evening withhold not our hand, since we know not which shall prosper, whether this or that"! How inspiring the admonition that "God seeth not as man seeth," but hath chosen the things which are "weak" and "foolish" and "despised" to work out His eternal counsels! Whoever is able to make one more flower grow beside the path of goodness, turn a single soul from the ways

of vice, or erect a warning beacon on any dangerous coast, may yet see the fruit thereof "shake like Lebanon." There are untold ministries of love within the power of the feeblest to perform. Your life is of priceless value, and should be held and used as a sacred gift, if it permits you to alleviate any human sorrow; if you can teach young feet to love the paths of truth, or cheer onward to duty any shrinking heart; if you can carry a cup of water to the wounded soldier, or lift up a fallen infant, or gather a simple flower for the wasting invalid. Not an empty thing, but above all price, your feeble existence, while you can return the pressure of a friendly hand, or teach one mortal how suffering should be borne, or repay kindness with gratitude's inspiring smile.

3. The poorest human life reveals its unspeakable worth when we consider, again, how God weaves it into His universal plan. Life everywhere is full of wonderful connections and interdependences. There is nothing so small but we may say that all things else exist for its sake; and then it is just as true, on the other hand, that it liveth not unto itself, but for the benefit of the universal whole. The welfare of each being is a trust committed to all other beings. It is not by becoming his own, but his brother's keeper, that every man is to help the order and bliss of the world. How beautiful this arrangement, — this law of reciprocity pervading rational life! We are not to look on our own things, but on another's; and to love one another is the blessed debt which can never be paid. Each ministering to the whole, and the whole to each; you guarding my rights, and I yours; no one caring for himself, but every one for his brethren, — such is the law of Christ's kingdom.

Nor is this interaction limited to finite life. God himself lives for every creature, and every creature for God. The redemption in Christ Jesus is for each individual soul: "He tasted death for every man." For every man,—not the mightiest only, but the least and lowest,—the gift of the Holy Ghost, the laws of matter and of spirit, the revealed truth, this wondrous fabric of world on world, and that nobler temple in which God is the glory and the Lamb the light. And while it is true that Jehovah exists both for all His creatures and for each one, it is just as true that they, not only in the mass but individually, exist for Him. "He has made all things for Himself," says the scripture. "The invisible things are clearly understood from the creation of the world,—even His eternal power and godhead." "The heavens declare His glory." "The earth is full of the riches of His goodness." All nature is musical with voices proclaiming His infinite perfections. Day unto day uttereth forth His faithfulness, and night unto night repeateth the story of His wisdom and power. And all history and experience—the upheavals of empires and every private joy or pain—are the letters which record His thoughts and ways. He has destined nothing for a purposeless existence, but has made everything beautiful in its season. Our life—though a vapor which appeareth but for a little time, and though we often esteem it a vain possession—has a part to bear in fulfilling His high purposes. He has created us because He had need of us; He knows the niche which each life is to fill, or the connection it must make in that vast structure which reveals Him, and which completes the measure of His joy.

We see not the finished picture, but only the background, the rough preparatory sketches and the un-mixed and scattered colors. But though all is so confused and unmeaning to us, the Great Artist knows just where each item belongs, and how indispensable it is to the perfection of His design. That life which we are inclined to overlook may be the point on which the character of the entire achievement turns, — a line which we may never discern, perhaps, but which, to God's eye and to the glory of His work, is the supreme and final thing.

The doctrine of the elder theologians, that true religion begins in the willingness to lie passively in God's hands, does not abase but exalt and glorify our humanity. Why should I deem it a humiliation to be woven into that web of wisdom at which the angels wonder? Is it not a transcendent honor to be but the smallest thread therein? Your life may seem but the veriest trifle. No regenerative force may go out from it into society. No man, no law in nature, may do obeisance thereto. You may be unable to serve; even your suffering may be curtained with darkness, and your struggles for self-conquest uncertain of their result, but the hand which sways creation takes you up as a very precious thing. God foresees the point at which there would be an appalling vacancy in His plan but for your little life. You may be the invisible line in the picture, the faint touch of color which only the Great Maker Himself discerns; but not the less necessary are you to His mighty purposes, — just as indispensable to the completeness of His dominions as the loftiest of the worshipers before the throne. Your brief existence is embosomed in the divine eternity. On His infinite heart you are up-

borne. The least of your doings is full of the meaning of His wondrous counsels. He is behind and before you, encompassing your life and pouring the mystery of His own being into it, holding it up from annihilation and rescuing it from every hazard and strait, lest there should be an all-spoiling defect in the one vast structure which He is rearing from everlasting to everlasting.

4. The poorest life has possibilities and alternatives of the most startling character. It is the childhood of an endless existence, the seed-time of an infinite harvest, the fountain-head of a bliss or woe immeasurable. Though it is not possible that any life should frustrate God's plan, since our "wrath," equally with our obedience, "praiseth" Him, yet it is for this brief time on earth to decide whether we shall reap "corruption," or "life everlasting," throughout the long eternity. Men sometimes draw back from the scriptural doctrine of retribution. They deem it unreasonable that such fearful awards should follow upon the doings of a life so short and feeble. But there is no absurdity in the doctrine. It is according to all analogy. The temporal destinies of men often hang on a moment, — often turn upon the slightest incident. The fate of empires and of races has many times been dependent on a single battle. Every grown person, no doubt, can recall the day and the hour in which some trifling circumstance fixed the current of his activities. And why, then, may not this earthly life, though a fleeting shadow, forecast the great hereafter? Why may it not stamp us with changeless characters, and give an impulse which shall fix the orbit of our immortality? Utterly insignificant in itself, "vanity of vanities," saith the Preacher, yet it

is the point from which two ways are ever open,—one into the dismal land which hath no place for repentance, the other into the midst of the paradise of God. Though no to-morrow should be vouchsafed you, yet for this day, yea, for this hour and moment, you owe infinite thanks, for in it you can choose whom you will serve; from it you may launch your soul, either upon a stormy and all-wrecking sea, or away upon peaceful waters where no form of evil ever comes.

THEORY AND PRACTICE IN RELIGION.

Let us go forth therefore unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach. — HEB. xiii. 13.

THE theory of religion and its practice should ever go hand in hand, as all men admit; but which of them shall lead the other is not so easy a matter to manage. If we study the teachings of Christ and his apostles, we shall see, I think, while they by no means slight the theory, that the practice is that to which they give special emphasis. And I think we must also admit that their way of putting the case has been exactly reversed many times; since not a few in the church, who affect to be guides and standards, have given but little thought to the practice, while devoting their whole lives to the theory. Let us look a little at this general statement.

1. First, the disposition to make the theory of religion hard and its practice easy. There have always been men in the church who represented this tendency. Perhaps there were never more of them than at the present day. They are men who believe with the head more than with the heart. Their aim seems to be to put the gospel into a series of abstract statements, rather than into their lives. They are eager to keep the faith of the churches intellectually correct. Look at any one of the historic creeds of Christendom. How much you find in them which is hard to be understood, and how little which moves and fires

your soul! The first of them, the Apostles' Creed, is comparatively simple, made up almost wholly of biblical statements. But those which come later, not excepting even the Nicene and Athanasian, are more or less the result of controversy. Some Christians accepted them, but others could not; and it is certain that many contended for one of them or for another, to the sad neglect of personal godliness. Among the most earnest champions of some of those hard theories of religion were men of loose and irregular lives. No one of us pretends to-day that we clearly see the meaning of all the statements in those confessions of faith. Can we commit a greater sacrilege, or more surely go before God with a lie in our hand, than by solemnly assenting to we know not what? Men cannot explain to us what they mean; yet they insist that we shall say Amen to their words, or be put under their ban. If they could have their way, every person who comes into the church would need to be an acute and deep thinker, with large stores of knowledge; and after getting in, it would not matter so much how he lived: the harder the theory, the easier the practice. Think of the labored efforts of men to prove the existence of God! Many of these labored arguments we fail to comprehend; it is not clear that the authors themselves understood what they were saying. Yet it is natural to all men to believe in God; His voice whispers in our hearts. If any doubt His existence, it is because their minds are blinded by sin. Let the Holy Spirit take away that veil, and they will believe; but you can never persuade them with words which only darken counsel. Your arguments will be more likely to drive them into doubt than lift them out of it. On almost all the so-called

high themes of religion, a mass of human statements has accumulated ; and these are made to block up the very entrance to the Christian life. The chief difficulty of the pastor, in dealing with religious inquirers, is to get such statements out of the way. They are the rocks and sands at the mouth of the harbor, amid which he must pilot the ship on its way. One great benefit of a revival is that it lifts men up on a wave of feeling out of the reach of theories, as the tide lifts the ships above hidden banks on which they would otherwise get aground. It is, in one view of it, painful to think how many men, whose names are renowned in church history, have devoted their lives to religious theorizing, with little or no concern for the spread of religion itself among men. We recall their names in connection with dogmas, speculations, and controversies, not in connection with the real life and growth of the church. As the sand of the desert blocks up temple-doors, and buries whole cities, in the East, so their thinking has dealt with the true city of God on earth. We must dig through the rubbish they have heaped up, or clamber over it, to get within the sacred walls. So great is the mass of intellectual theory, which in process of time has grown up on nearly every religious question, that those whose only care is to save men are more fain to thrust it backward than forward. However much of it may be true, it is not what the inquirer needs. It does not open the way into the kingdom of heaven, but blocks it up. It may be food to us some time, but certainly is not while we are new converts. It may benefit now and then an exceptional person, but not the great mass of men and women. But a still worse result, perhaps, of making the theory of religion so difficult,

is that it blinds one to the importance of the practice. Practice is always more a matter of will and genuine feeling than of intellect. You may reach will by way of the intellect, though not if you make this your stopping-place. The man of theories does this. He is satisfied when the head assents to his teaching, and does not go on to emotion and action. Hence the result which we so often see, in those who are all the time fighting about the standards and confessions, is wholly natural. They are so taken up with the theory as to forget the practice. They rend the churches asunder under the pretense of keeping them pure in doctrine. They dream that they are saving Christianity, when they are only loading it with scandals. That in them which alone can make them earnest workers for Christ lies wholly neglected. They have no heart for evangelism, but the rather deride it. Their presence chills the prayer-meeting and the room for religious inquiry. We find it hard to say whether how much they know, or how little they do, is most remarkable. You can hardly detect a shade of difference between their life and that of the thoroughly worldly man, or, if you do, they are as likely to be below as above him. Yet they will fight for the last iota of the hardest religious theory, bitterly denouncing all who think not as they do, and casting out their name as evil. And thus you have that sad incongruity, — the utmost vigor of intellectual belief coupled with a life which dishonors the gospel.

2. Now we must just reverse these terms if we would go back to Christ and His apostles. They do not make the theory hard and the practice easy, but the contrary. They give you but little to comprehend and a great deal to do. According to them, the theory

is easy and the practice hard. The two go hand-in-hand, but practice leads, and theory follows. "If any man do His will, he shall know of the doctrine." The Bible does not disparage doctrine, nor do I in this sermon. But if you look closely, you will see that much which it calls doctrine is for the feelings and will, more than for the intellect or understanding. Yet it does not object even to this, where the Christian worker grows naturally into it. Christ did not say, "Learn of me, for I understand all knowledge," but "Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart." His life of gentleness and love, set before us as a pattern, is what we are first of all to learn. He does not wish us to vex our souls with prying into things which the angels cannot look on. We shall know only as we follow on after His example of meekness and self-sacrifice. Let it not trouble us, though we now know but in part, is His blessed reassurance to us all. If we have true Christian love warming and filling our hearts, a day is coming when we shall know as we are known. Without this love we should be as sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal, though we had all knowledge and understood all mystery. Thus gentle was Christ with all who came to Him. No matter what else they lacked, if His spirit was in them. No matter how much of other things they could not accept, if they would only accept Him. He did not draw to Himself those who claimed to know most of the theory, but those who were ready for the practice. "Can ye drink of my cup, can ye be baptized with my baptism?" was what He said to such as asked for the chief seats in His kingdom. The wise and learned rejected Him; but as many as received Him, no matter how simple or how ignorant of doctrine, to them gave He power

to become the sons of God. He did not choose doctors of the law to be His apostles, but fishermen and carpenters. His aim as a teacher was not to instruct His disciples in regard to theories of religion, but to make them pure in heart. If they became temples of the Holy Spirit, He would lead them into the truth; would teach them all that they ought to know. He did not try to prove the existence of God to any. That was taken for granted, as already the faith of them all when He said, "Ye believe in God, believe also in me." Christ nowhere contended with men for religious theories; all He required of them in His appeals was, that they should follow Him. But if the theory of religion was made so easy to men by Christ and His apostles, the practice was made very hard. The perfect Christian life, that is, was painted as a great and difficult thing. Christ was thoroughly honest and outspoken. He did not conceal aught of all that is implied in coming after Him. Men might not be able to reach the standard; nevertheless there it was, — higher than heaven, broader than the earth. They could not afford to waste any energy in theorizing, in trying to comprehend mystery; they needed it all for their daily discipleship. The gate to this life of practical piety was strait, and its way was narrow. Whosoever would be perfect in it must forsake all that he had, must hate his own life even, must prefer Christ's service to home and kindred. Here is where the difficulty of being a Christian came in, as Christ Himself saw the case. It is well put in the words of our text: "Let us go forth therefore unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach." The "reproach" was the cross which Christ bore to the place of His crucifixion. He had spoken of the cross to His dis-

principles, and of their duty to bear it after Him in the course of His ministry. And this metaphor, which was no metaphor but a dread reality to Him, can mean but one thing. We must be wholly consecrated and ready to suffer anything, even as He willingly faced the most terrible of deaths, if we would be His perfect disciples. When we begin to follow Him, we must take up our cross; we must show our readiness, that is, for any self-denial and for any sacrifice, though it be of our own life even, which may come in the way of our discipleship. He suffered without the camp, in the place of guilt and human scorn. And we are to go forth to Him into that same place, bearing the cross as He did, thus signifying our readiness to be crucified. We read that He was made a curse for us, as some of the beasts sacrificed in the tabernacle service were made a curse for the children of Israel. "The bullock for the sin-offering, and the goat for the sin-offering," we read in Exodus, "shall one carry forth without the camp, and shall burn them in the fire." "Wherefore Jesus also," says the apostle, "that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered without the gate." We also read of the scape-goat, over which the priest recited the sins of the people, and which, with this load of imputed guilt, was sent away into the wilderness to perish. Thus did the work of Christ appear to John the Baptist when he said, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." To be ready for such a service and sacrifice as this, is what the perfect discipleship requires. What man, who was only a man, has ever yet met the requirement? Perhaps St. Paul came near to it when he said that he was ready to be offered, or when he declared that he could wish

himself accursed from God for his kindred after the flesh. It is the martyr spirit rising up within us, and controlling the whole man, which Christ requires. That it is possible, we know from the case of Stephen, of James the Lord's brother, from the history of the Colosseum at Rome, from the hymns of victory sung in many a consuming flame in more recent times. Yet there was a vicarious element in what Christ did, making Him more than the martyrs; and in this He, rather than they, is our pattern. Ah, how hard! It may be possible to us some time, dear friends, but not now. It is the mark which we have set before us, but we have not yet attained. Shall we ever attain? Nay, let us not revolve that question too much, lest we be cast down in our minds. But let us look toward the mark. Let us not waste any strength on idle questions: we need it all for this holy service. When we give the proof in our daily lives that we are wholly consecrated, it will be time enough for us to try to understand the deep things of God. First we will apprehend that for which we have been apprehended in Christ Jesus; and then, if we have any desire that way, we will turn our minds to those human views of truth which now puzzle and confound, and divide and distract, so many sections of the Christian world.

3. And now perhaps you say there is small comfort in Christ, since, while He takes away one difficulty, He puts another in its place. Nay, dear friends, you may make your objection stronger than that; for if Christ puts out of your way all the difficulties of theoretical religion, He puts before you the impossibility of practical religion. Do not misunderstand me. I mean a perfect Christian life, a life wholly like His. That I believe to be impossible to me, to you, to every

man, at the beginning. It may hereafter become possible, as we grow unto the measure and stature of Christ's fullness.

But in this trouble help comes to us all. The tenderness and gentleness of Christ come to our relief. His long-suffering and forbearance are our refuge. We shall not be afraid to undertake what now seems impossible to us, when we forget ourselves and begin to feel under us the arm of His almighty love. In Christ extremes meet; that is, He is higher than the highest, and at the same time in full sympathy with the lowest. He knows our frame better than we know it ourselves. He understands, as we never shall, how impossible it is that we should at once come up to the measure of His devotion. Yet that is the goal which He sets far away before us, and which He encourages us to hope that we may one day reach in the strength which comes to us from Him. It was not a new convert who wrote our text, but one who had long been growing in conformity to Christ. Yet he looked on a perfect discipleship as something for him yet to attain. He still pressed toward the mark, and looking around on his friends he says, "Let us go forth therefore unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach." Sometimes, when we read the words of Christ setting before us the perfect standard of duty, we are tempted to say, with the first disciples, "Who, then, can be saved?" But nothing can encourage us more than those same words of Christ, dear friends, when we see in them, not what we must now be, but what we all can become. It is no small thing which Christ undertakes to do for us. He proposes to work out a mighty change in us, by the power of a divine life dwelling in us, which our

faith in Him brings into our souls. He will raise us up to heights of holiness which now are far out of our sight. He will change us into His own image, from glory to glory, while we look on His face. He will make us perfect as our Father in heaven is perfect. His life which He gives unto us will gradually produce in us that spirit which loves its enemies, which does good hoping for nothing, which blesses them that curse it, which sells all and gives to the poor; which makes itself a living sacrifice, as ready for the cross as Christ was, if it may thereby honor the truth or save a soul from death. Nothing should inspire us more, dear friends, than the certainty that we may reach this high character. It is so sure that Christ expects it of us all! He presents it in the form of a command; and He, too, gives us the strength to obey. But while so great things are to be done for us in the end, Christ begins by coming down to us just where we are. The word is nigh us. We are only to confess our risen Saviour, and with the heart to believe on His name. He does not ask of us what we have not, but only what we have. He accepts us for the willing mind. When we have done what we could, it is enough. He takes our scant service and makes it great, as He made the five loaves and two small fishes feed the multitude. He even chides us when we are discouraged by the poorness of our service. He does not quench the smoking flax. He says to the bowed and silent penitent, "Go thy way, sin no more." When we look on Him and faint at the distance between His character and ours, He says: "The works which I do shall ye do; and greater works shall ye do, because I go to the Father." Nor is He less patient and tender when we fall in the way, or stray out

of it. How kindly He dealt with Peter! — did not cast him off because of the denial, but gently admonished him, and drew him back into the way of his duty. Thus forbearing is Christ toward all His imperfect disciples. They may despise one another, but He never despises any. They may be censorious, but He is not. He does not give over the erring, but chastens them that He may receive them. Though we sin against Him seventy times seven, yet He forgives us and loves us still. He does not despair of us even when we despair of ourselves; and though all men should be against us, He is for us. We make the theory hard and the practice easy, but He makes the theory easy and the practice hard. Yet this hard practice points to the end more than to the beginning of the Christian life. It is not meant to discourage but to inspire our hope. It assures us, however faulty our obedience may now be, that a day is coming when the spirit which was in Christ shall be in us also.

MANLINESS.

Show thyself a man. — 1 KINGS ii. 2.

HE shows himself a man who goes about his work, whatever it may be, in man-fashion. Such an one is not listless, but in earnest. He works; he does not dawdle. He brings all his faculties and powers to bear on what he is doing; his devotion is complete, not partial. He does not allow his attention to be diverted or distracted. He sees his object, and nothing can break his determination to gain it. He does not boast or bluster. He does not look around to see who may be applauding or blaming him. He just does with his might what his hand finds to do, with singleness of eye, with firmness of purpose, with concentration of mind, and with the least noise or disturbance to others possible.

There is a lesson for you in nature, if you would know what it is for one to do his work in a manful way. The sun does not loiter in his daily task. He comes forth from his chambers in the east, and rejoices as a strong man to run a race. He shines on, though clouds and darkness are often about him. Steadiness, earnestness, no resting, one continuous and strong march till his journey is done, are in the example he sets you. The earth, turning on its axis and rolling through its orbit, also sets you an example. If you could do your work as the earth does its work, you would indeed show yourself a man. How true it has

been to its daily and yearly task ever since it was launched into the sky! Many of the lower animals, dear friends, are all the time teaching us a lesson, setting us an example. What perfect servants to you your horses and oxen often are! If you would do the work God gives you as well as they do the work you give them, this would be a world of order, happiness, and joy. The beneficent changes in nature can all be depended upon. There is no caprice in them. They come in their fixed round, as though they thoroughly felt the importance of what they have to do. While the earth has stood, summer and winter, cold and heat, seed-time and harvest, day and night, have known their places. The whole creation above and beneath, in things small and great, is earnest, determined, steady in its movements. You have only to be like it in the task which God has given you, and you will live a perfect life. You will show yourself a man when you do what a man should, as the sun and earth and seasons, and obedient dumb creatures, are each perfect in their places by doing their parts in the general plan. How unworthy of us to evade the path of duty, to linger in it, to grow weary of our work, and let our minds be diverted from it, while this earnest, unswerving, and withal joyous life is ever going on about us and over our heads!

David spoke the words of our text to Solomon, when Solomon was about to succeed him on the throne of Israel. God gives each of us something to do in the world. He gave Solomon a kingdom to govern. And his wish, coming by David, was that he should be a manly king. There had been many unmanly kings before the day of Solomon, and there have been many since his day. He did not himself escape this

weakness in the latter part of his reign. He showed himself a man when he first came to the throne; was altogether worthy of his high office, punishing crimes, redressing wrongs, tempering justice with mercy, deserving and receiving the glad homage of his subjects. But when he swerved from this manly course, became effeminate, dallied with false religions, and sought to profit by his people rather than do them good, then the seeds of revolt were sown, which bore their dread harvest in the time of Rehoboam. Saul, the first king of Israel, did his royal work in a very unmanly way. He did not seem to comprehend its meaning. He looked on the kingdom as his own, and not as a great trust received from God. His desire in reigning was to please himself, and advance his own name and family, rather than be a blessing to his people. He had an impulsive generosity; he was a brave warrior; he had his moments of noble inspiration; but he utterly failed to show himself a man. He was not true to his trust, as the sun and earth are to theirs. Christ has taught us, by His words and in His life, what a man should be. He, who was the Son of man, made it His business to minister to others. So far as Saul, or David, or Solomon failed to do this, he did not make a manly use of his royal power. When Joash was brought forth by the priest Jehoiada and made king of Judah, he, though he was but eight years old, began to show how a king who is but a boy may be a man. He put an end to the abuses which had grown up under Athaliah, idolatries ceased out of the land, and the worship of the true God was reëstablished. Joash found by studying the law that his kingdom was a theocracy, founded for the working out of certain great purposes of God. From that, its lawful

end, it had been sadly turned aside; and his first care was to bring it back to its original idea. In this he showed a determination to be true to his high trust. If not a man in years, he yet was in spirit and in the conduct of his kingdom. He did not show himself a tyrant or a brute, but was so faithful, in the place where God had put him, that he was more than a king; he was a man. It was not his royal title, but his sturdy manhood, which honored God. However high one's position is, his character is something higher if what it ought to be. The office may be great, but he is greater by simply showing himself a true man. If you are a brother of low degree, you may have such a manhood that no one will ever think of the degree. That is sunk out of sight. Oh, what a victory if, when men think of you, all else is forgotten, — your poverty or wealth, your weakness or power, your obscurity or renown, — and they see before their minds only a true man, made in the image of God!

Kings are not the only persons, therefore, who should show themselves men. There were prophets in Israel and Judah in the days of the kings, and some of these, almost as much as the kings, failed of being true men. Samuel is almost the only one, whose whole history we know, on whom there rests no stain. From infancy on, through youth and mature life, into old age, and even till death, he was true to his office. He was steady, earnest, and vigilant in the work which God gave him. If his name stands out conspicuous in the past, that is because his lofty manhood lifted it up far above all that his prophetic rank could do. Elisha also, in the time of Ahab, was another who for the manful discharge of duty may stand near to

Samuel. Of the personal history of other prophets we do not know so much. Elijah was at times exceedingly brave; and the only fit way for such a man as he to leave the world was in a whirlwind of fire. But at times he lost heart, and murmured, and fled away from the face of danger into deserts and caves. He hardly showed himself a man while sitting under the juniper tree, and wishing for himself that he might die. He certainly was not a man in the sense of our text, but showed that human weakness from which a true manhood makes one free. When the Lord told Jonah to go and preach in Nineveh, Jonah did an unmanly thing in running away and taking ship to flee to Tarshish. God taught him, by a wonderful deliverance from the sea, that His servants are never unsafe. Being thus admonished, he found courage to go to Nineveh when God spoke the second time. But again he forgot himself, and failed to play the man, when God, moved by the penitence of Nineveh, reversed His word concerning it. Jonah did not so use his prophetic office as to leave behind him the impression of an earnest and faithful man. That sturdy old prophet Micaiah, in the time of Ahab and Jehoshaphat, might have taught him a lesson. Micaiah was not afraid of Ahab and his terrible wife Jezebel, and his four hundred and fifty false prophets. He told them to their faces what God thought of them, and for his manly honesty had been thrown into prison. When he was sent for, at the instance of Jehoshaphat, on the eve of the fatal march against Ramoth-Gilead, he dared to be a man as well as a prophet. They might mock him, and smite him, and starve him to death in their dungeons, but they could not make him false to his divine office. The word

which God had given him he would speak, thus doing his duty man-fashion; and what should come of it was not for him but for God to determine.

Dear friends, there were captives in ancient times who showed themselves men more than some prophets and kings. Such was Joseph. Rather than commit a crime, he would be cast into prison by Pharaoh. He was but a youth; yet he feared not to suffer, or even to die, while his manhood remained to him unstained. The dreams of greatness which had come to him years before did not turn his head, though he had the simplicity to tell them. He would be a man in Egypt, although he was a slave. A dark cloud rested on his future, but he would not fling away the present. He still believed that God was God, and that nothing else became him so much as to be a man. It is not the power and honor to which Joseph rose in Egypt for which we now admire him. He could not have thus risen but for the sturdy manliness which was in him; and this it is which has made him a memorable example to all the young. And the manly spirit which was in him was again acted out, many centuries later, at the court of Babylon by Daniel, another Hebrew captive. What a temptation to him to be so in favor with the king! His office of cupbearer brought him into the midst of all the voluptuous feasts and revels at the royal palace. But the eating and drinking were in the presence of idols, often the accompaniment or even a part of idolatrous worship. Hence Daniel abhorred the feasts, though his duty forced him to see them. As a true man he served his royal master, and as a true man he would not be false to his God. Nothing which had the taint of idolatry upon it could be made to enter his mouth. When

fears were expressed about his health, he had faith to throw himself on God; and the result of the experiment which he permitted to be tried showed that God does not forsake those who do not forsake Him. Daniel believed what God had said concerning Jerusalem; and therefore he was man enough to pray for its rebuilding though accused for it to the king. Just to test the sturdiness of his faith, the decree went forth that whoever prayed to any but the king should be given to the lions. But Daniel was not overawed. He still opened his windows, and prayed three times a day with his face toward Jerusalem. Here, now, is the grand fact in Daniel's history. He was more than a fair and accomplished young person, more than a favorite at court, more than a prophet by whom God spoke to the king. He was a man and dared to show that he was. He played the man at the risk of everything else; for his manliness was of that noble kind which the most terrible threats cannot make untrue to itself.

The captive who shows himself a man is greater than the prophet or king who does not. If you are true yourself and put that truth into all your work, whatever you do will be glorious. It is not on the office or station, but on the man, that everything depends.

Christ chose out twelve men to be disciples or apostles under Him. This gave them a certain official dignity; but it was a shame to them, rather than an honor, if they failed to exercise their office in a manly way. The office did not hide Peter's shame, but made him the more abhorred, when he denied his Master. Judas held the official rank of an apostle, but that could not save him from the infamy of his

own sin. The fact of discipleship only made more obvious the baseness of those who were not manly enough to stand by their Lord in his extremity, but forsook him and fled. It is the misfortune of many persons that their names cannot be forgotten. The providence of God gave them a place in history which ensures their immortality. But it is an immortality by no means to be desired. They are remembered only to be abhorred. The greater the part they acted in life the deeper their shame, since they acted in a very unmanly way. We are accustomed to say, when a man becomes a disciple of Christ, that he is on the road to all perfection. That is true. But he must put his manhood into his discipleship, or it will do him small good. Only as the first disciples became true men did their discipleship lift them to holiness and to God. Those who loved the praise of men more than the praise of God might as well have been called something else as followers of Christ. It would have been better for Ananias not to pretend to consecrate his land than it was to do this and then keep a part of its price to himself. Peter and John showed the spirit which our text recommends when, being forbidden to preach any more in Christ's name, they said, "We must obey God rather than men." No matter how great any work may be in which you engage, it can do you no honor if a truly manful spirit be left out of it; and, however small it may be, such a spirit in it makes it noble.

Have we ever thought how much the divine manliness of Christ had to do with the glory of His life on earth? He called himself the Son of man; and there was no name in which He delighted more than this. He was the only perfect Man that has ever

lived. The Spirit of God, resting without measure upon Him, made Him what no one else has been. Go where He would, all things about Him were lifted up and made noble by His presence. He filled out every relation of life to its utmost meaning; no other such Friend, Brother, Teacher, Son, Redeemer, because no other such Man. It was not His actions and words in themselves, but the glory of a divine manhood filling them, which made them so wonderful. This transfigured everything He touched. This made beautiful the plain and rude people whom He loved and who returned His love. If some other person, less a man than He, had done the very same things which He did, there would have been no such result. Besides all else which God has taught us by sending His Son into the world, He has shown how wondrous a thing our human nature may be when wholly free from the taint of sin. God crowned man with glory and honor, and set him over the work of His hands. Wherever you find a true man, a person who is all which that high word implies, there you find that to which outward glory can add nothing. It eclipses the most splendid surroundings; it transfigures the meanest earthly lot. We do not stop to ask whether its robe be of purple or sackcloth, for we are wholly taken up and carried away by the thing itself.

And here we see that there can be no true manhood which does not have its root and sources in God. Christ was in the Father and the Father in Him; and this is what made Him the only perfect Man the world has ever seen. True manhood is not something which we have already attained: it is an ideal toward which the best and holiest are as yet struggling. We have not apprehended but we press toward the mark. In

the highest sense of the words, no one will show himself a man till his character reflects the image of Christ. As He said when He came into the world, so you must be able to say, "Lo! I come to do thy will, O God," or the germs of a true manhood are yet to spring up in you. If you were a king and did not use your royal power for God's glory and the good of your subjects, you would not be a man, and so would lose what is more to you than a kingdom. If you were a prophet and prophesied falsely, you would not be the better but the worse for your noble gift. Whatever you do, do it in man-fashion, doing all to the glory of God, and you have every reason to be therewith content. The manly slave shall wear a nobler immortality beside the crystal waters than the unmanly king. Take Christ's name upon you, and so let all the world see that you have made His divine manhood your great ideal. Having set this perfect pattern of a Man before you, press bravely toward it in the strength which God imparts. Serve your Lord and Master as one should who has begun to show himself a man. Faith in Him is the only point from which a true life can begin, and whoever manfully lives out that life, filling his earthly lot with it, and pouring it into whatever he does, whether great or small, shall at length find that it has made him a king and priest unto his God.

TURNING DEATH INTO LIFE.

And everything shall live whither the river cometh. — EZEKIEL
xlvi. 9.

WE have in the first twelve verses of the forty-seventh chapter of Ezekiel a picture of the world so far as yet unchristianized, and also more especially a picture of the blessed work which the gospel is to do in the world by its progress and final triumphs. Is it not a picture which we should be glad to contemplate, that our courage and zeal and faith may be set on fire as often as we look around us and before us on the kingdom we are trying to extend? Though this were a spiritually dead world but for Jesus Christ, yet the flowing out from Him of those regenerative forces which are to turn that death into life has already begun. The "East country," towards which our text says the waters issued out, is the upper part of the valley of Jehoshaphat lying between the ridge on which Jerusalem stands and the Olivet range. The "desert" into which those waters go down when they turn southward, is that same valley, widening or narrowing in its course, and full of rocks and sandy wastes, and the tombs and graves of the dead. The sea into which the waters are "brought forth," and which is healed by their life-giving touch, is the dead sea in which the valley of Jehoshaphat suddenly and dismally ends. That valley and sea were to the Jewish mind a symbol of what is most barren, most

gloomy, most desolate. This would be especially true at the sad time when Ezekiel wrote. How profound his sense of the dead and wasted condition of a sinful world, while he chooses the blighted valley of the Kidron, and the sea in which no fish can live, to image that condition forth! It was across the valley of the Kidron that David fled from his son Absalom, broken-hearted and weeping as he went on, passing the heights of Bahurim from which Shimei cast down stones upon him. By the brook Kidron Asa, when he came to the throne, destroyed and burnt the idol which his mother had set up, near which in a grove an abominable worship had been long practiced. Here, according to Josephus, the terrible Athaliah, daughter of the equally terrible Jezebel, was at the command of Jehoiada slain. In this valley, near to Jerusalem, the bloody and loathsome idol-worships, into which God's people were so prone to be led away, were for a long time practiced. Into it, or one of its branches, the litter and filth of the city were carried forth and burnt, whence our Saviour's image of Gehenna, the valley of the son of Hinnom, in which the fire was not quenched. The valley of Jehoshaphat became a cemetery about the time of king Josiah, thus rendering it unclean in the eyes of all Jews; and one of the miracles which Jeremiah foretold, thus anticipating the prophecy in our text, was the recovering of the polluted place to its early sacredness. Blight, desolation, uncleanness, and death were what the valley to the east and south stood for to the mind of Ezekiel. This was his symbol of the spiritual condition of men, which he drew for those whom he was addressing. And if we follow on down the dead ravine till we come to the sea at its mouth, the same lesson is impressed on us still. How

like the false world that sea is! Its waters are said to be clear, and its surface a bright blue-and-green under the crystalline sky, but nothing can live in its depths: it is supposed that the wicked cities of the plain strew its bottom with their wrecks; on its shore grow those apples of Sodom golden to the sight, but which turn to ashes on the lips. Such is man, such is the world, whether Jew or Gentile, the prophet means that we shall understand, as he paints his picture of the valley and the sea which are dead.

Did Ezekiel exaggerate, dear friends, in this? Did he paint the Christless world more desolate and dead than it really is? Not if we take the Bible testimony as true. Go back to the times before the flood. What was then the spiritual state of the world, on account of which the flood came? Do we not find the fitting symbol of it in the valley and sea of Ezekiel's vision? It was necessary to put what remained of goodness into an ark, and float it off on the waters which drowned all else, in order that some seeds of hope for the future might be saved. "It repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved Him to the heart. And the Lord said, I will destroy man whom I have created from off the face of the earth." "God looked upon the earth, and behold it was corrupt;" and God said, "The earth is filled with violence." Such is the charge which is brought against the world in Genesis, — a world which had forsaken God, and upon which this heavy charge must still rest so long as it is a Christless world. Dead, corrupt, needing to be buried out of God's sight, is the voice which we hear sounding through the times of the patriarchs, of Moses, of the Judges, of Samuel. Nor do we miss the sad refrain in the minstrelsy of

the sweet singer of Israel. How he bemoans the blight which has fallen on his own soul, in the fifty-first Psalm! And in another psalm, catching up words which echo out of the dim past, he says: "The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand and seek God. They are all gone aside, they are together become filthy; there is none that doeth good, no, not one." This is David's indictment against himself and against the world. Does it not warrant the picture which Ezekiel drew of the valley and the sea? Looking on that picture, would not Moses and the prophets say, "It is true, it is not too strong a symbol of what we have seen or felt, and have recorded as the spirit of God moved us"? Does our Lord Jesus Christ himself say anything less than this in his parables, in his sermons, in his private talks, in which he so accuses and upbraids both the Jews and the Gentiles? I think St. Paul knew as much of his own heart, and of the world's heart, as any man has ever known. Yet there is nothing in the Old Testament or in the gospels more terrible than what he says in the first, second, and third of Romans. He quotes the strongest words of the holy men of old, and to these he adds others of appalling severity, prompted by what he had seen of heathen life in his mission travels. Yes, dear friends, you must go outside of epistle, outside of gospel, outside of psalm and prophecy, outside the lids of the divine book, if you would find anything to prove that Ezekiel's picture was too dark.

And if you go outside into secular history, into any or all of the Christless civilizations, whether ancient or modern, what then? They all tell the same story which Ezekiel's vision told. Where is Egypt now?

Look on her faded landscapes, her wretched, starving people ; and then think of what she once was ! — the mother of ancient letters, science and art, as her papyrus rolls, her buried cities, her tombs, her obelisks, her pyramids show. All gone, and her people sunk into a dead sea of beggary and vice ! Her far-off beginnings, like the fountains of Gihon which once flowed into Kidron, are to-day like the sea of death, and the wasted valley full of the graves of the dead. If she is getting any life, is starting up from her slumber in these recent years and showing any small capacity for enterprise and thrift, this has come to her out of other nations that are Christian ; the blessed waters, which make everything they touch live, are beginning to mingle with her Christless life. Nineveh, Babylon, ay, Troy and Mycenæ, are telling the same story, once vast and magnificent, now buried out of sight ; once ruling over nations, now the abodes of the robber and owl and jackal ; springing forth in the early antiquity like the fountains and pools which watered the gardens of Siloam, now like the valley of tombs and graves and the bitter sea of death to which that valley leads down. The story which these particular chapters of ancient history tell, the whole volume tells. The history of the entire world is like the history of its parts. And what humanity is, such is every man, — a dreary abyss of desolation and death is the Christless soul. There may be much mechanical and mental activity in China, in Japan, in southern India, but, alas ! how little spiritual life where the waters of the heavenly river have not gone ! A dead world, full of dead souls, — dead because cut off from God so as no more to live by the infinite life in Him, — is the sentence which we roundly give ; and we find no real

contradiction of it, but much to confirm it everywhere, in the Bible and out of the Bible. We behold actual humanity spreading away down and before us, like the valley from Jerusalem, and we say, "Can this withered and scorched chasm be made fruitful, can these deadly waters be healed?"

The answer to the wondering prophet, from his divine Guide who takes him up to the temple, is, that the blessed transformation can take place. In Christ all shall be made alive. Study that image of the river, first ankle-deep, then knee-deep, then to the loins, then a river to swim in, and see how exactly it answers to the divine life in Christ which has already begun to flow forth into the world with renovating power. I do not believe that Ezekiel's prophecy is something whose fulfillment is yet to begin. I believe that the heavenly waters began to bubble up in the hearts of those whom the Holy Spirit led, before Christ came to our world; I believe that the stream grew wider and deeper at His birth, wider and deeper still when He died, when He rose from the dead, when He ascended up, — according to His own saying, "The works which I do shall ye do, and greater works shall ye do, because I go to the Father."

There are some who say that the blessed stream is growing smaller and smaller, — that it is doomed to sink into the sand, and not to reappear till Christ's second coming. But I find no such teaching as that in the prophecy; on the contrary, just the opposite. The river grows, it does not diminish; it grows steadily, all the time showing a larger and mightier sweep through the valley. In just what stage of its whole course the blessed river of the gospel is, we cannot tell; it may be a long time before the living fish

shall be seen swimming in the sea. But there is steady progress, and has been ever since Christ ascended. Apostolic missions planted a leaven in the East, the savor of which is there still. The early work which they did has not utterly failed, as we sometimes hastily think. Throughout Syria and Turkey and Persia, up the Nile and on the deserts, memories are found, traditions, religious customs and beliefs, which recall the practice and doctrine of the first Christian disciples. If the people of those lands need to be again evangelized, that need is due more to their degeneracy and superstition under oppressive governments than to any failure of the gospel among them. At the lakes of Tanganyika and Nyanza, in Central Africa, have been found a people ready to welcome the spirit and teachings of the New Testament. Whether you read the whole history of Christianity, its history since the time of Luther, or since the first missionaries went to the Sandwich Islands, the proofs are overwhelming. The vision of Ezekiel is coming true. Where was spiritual death we are seeing more and more of spiritual life. The desert is blossoming. The river of salvation, springing forth by the altar in the sanctuary, is on its way. If we do not see "Holiness to the Lord" written on the bells of the horses, we see something very much like it even stamped on some of our coins. The first words which throbbed through the wires of the telegraph were, "What hath God wrought!" "Peace on earth, goodwill toward men," was sent flashing under the sea as soon as the ocean cable was laid. One of the great buildings in London, whose power over the commerce of the world is everywhere acknowledged, has written on its high pediment the words, "The earth is the

Lord's, and the fullness thereof." There is no mistaking these large signs of the spirit of our day. Whatever partial failures, or retrograde here and there, there may be, the activity and enterprise of the world is, on the whole, steadily receiving into itself more and more of the spirit of Christ. We might as well doubt the motion of the earth as the progress of Christ's kingdom. To oppose that kingdom is like trying to turn the earth back in its orbit: to be in it and of it is to live safely and victoriously. Should some engineering skill, like that which has made a path for commerce through Egyptian sands, also let the waters of the great sea into the African desert, the gospel of Christ will ride triumphant on their tides to almost the last centre of Satan's kingdom.

We have seen now, dear friends, what was the general scope of Ezekiel's vision, — how it imaged forth the spiritual state of a Christless world, and the renovation which Christ should bring. St. John had a similar vision in Patmos, which he speaks of in strikingly similar terms. Indeed, he helps us to the high and true meaning of what Ezekiel saw. His river proceeding out of the throne of God and the Lamb is that which gushed up by the altar in the Temple. His is a river of life, and so was that. Ezekiel says: "And by the river on the bank thereof, on this side and on that side, shall grow all trees for meat, whose leaf shall not fade, neither shall the fruit thereof be consumed: it shall bring forth new fruit according to his months, because their waters they issued out of the sanctuary; and the fruit thereof shall be for meat, and the leaf thereof for medicine." This is what the prophet foretold, and this is what the apostle saw coming true; for John says: "And he showed me a pure

river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations." Thus did the seer in Patmos behold the gospel which came by Christ flowing through the world, and giving life and joy to whatever it touched, as Ezekiel had seen so long before, and as the story of the Christian ages everywhere confirms. The healing stream sprang up by the altar; and the altar in the Temple, we know, foreshadowed the cross of Christ. Calvary, then, with its cross and sacrifice, is the centre from which the world's renovation begins. Wonderful as was the birth of Christ, we are not to look to that. Wonderful as was His daily walk, and the words He spake, our salvation does not begin in them. It is under the altar, beneath the shadow of the cross, that we are to find the fountain-head of the stream which awakes and blesses the world. The cross and its sacrifice must be preached as the way by which God's own life comes down into the souls of men. What becomes of your river when you leave that out, that which is its source? "God forbid that I should glory in aught else save the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ," said St. Paul; and the passion which men have for multiplying forms of the cross in architecture, in jewels, and other personal ornaments, is a dumb confession of the universal human heart that the sacrifice on Calvary is God's most precious gift to His sinning children. That is the unspeakable gift. That takes away the sins of the world. That brings life eternal into souls dead in sin. Ezekiel saw the stream of life flowing from the

altar; John saw it flowing from under the throne in heaven. God and the Lamb both sat on that throne. They were alike concerned in giving life to the world. No disagreement, but perfect consent and union, marked their counsel in the plan which they laid before the world was, and which they have been carrying out through all the ages of time.

Yes, dear friends, the world's redemption is not of any human origin; it proceeds from the throne of God and the Lamb. They preside over it still. It is essentially a supernatural and divine work, as was the life-giving river which Ezekiel saw. No merely natural waters could awake and beautify the dead valley of the Kidron; no natural stream could heal the sea in which nothing lived. The Jordan had been flowing down into that dead sea from its beginning. The beautiful Jordan! born of the pure snows of Lebanon and Hermon, bursting forth in such sudden volume near Cæsarea Philippi, gathering itself into the clear lake Merom, flowing on amid verdure and bloom and golden grain, receiving into its stream the waters of Israel and Gilead, making the fair sea of Galilee which our Lord so loved, winding in many a graceful fold through the low and rich valley on past the city of palm-trees! — this Jordan, so oft overflowing all its banks, through whose channel Israel went dry-shod, which the mantle of Elijah divided twice, and in which the Saviour of the world was baptized, could not freshen and sweeten the sea of death. So, dear friends, there is nothing in art and government however venerable, nothing in mere culture however superb, nothing in merely human or natural influences though as sacred as the Jordan itself, which can deliver and save the world. The world has had all this

for ages on ages, is still having it to repletion, yet at the mouth of it all we find a dead sea. The river of God, the stream which is not natural but supernatural, which springs from the altar, from the cross, from under the throne of God and the Lamb, must do the work. The spiritual *renaissance*, that quickening and adorning of human society which is to give us the new heaven and new earth, must begin from God the Father and God the Son, and must have the life of the blessed Trinity in it all the way, whether it be to the ankles, or to the knees, or to the loins, or a river broad and deep in which one may swim. It must be full of the life of God, or it cannot bring healing to the sea, or it cannot make whatever thing it comes to live, or there will not be on its banks the trees whose fruit is for meat and their leaves for medicine. What the dead seas and valleys of human society need; what you and I need, dear friends, in order that we may be the sons of God which He made us to be, — is not more culture, not more knowledge, not more of that refinement which the skill and genius of man may bring, but an awakening, cleansing, and sanctifying life brought down by the Holy Spirit into our souls. May the grace of the Lord Jesus evermore keep us in that life-giving communion, and let us rejoice in the truth that our fellowship with the Spirit is in a kingdom which takes no step backward, but whose power flows out and on, and will be ever vaster and mightier, till it has made all things new!

THE PRAYERS OF THE SAINTS.

And the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps and golden vials full of odors, which are the prayers of saints. — REVELATION V. 8.

THE prayers of the saints. Not of any given number of the saints, whether in heaven or on earth, but of all the saints. The prayers of those above and of those below; of those now alive on the earth, and of those who have lived throughout the past generations of men. Every prayer of contrite and submissive spirits that has been lifted up since the time when men first began to call on the name of the Lord until now. That atmosphere of entreaty, breathed forth from God-fearing hearts, which ever since the early twilight of history has embosomed the world. The prayers of every lonely widow, of every dependent orphan, of the sailor sinking in the waves, of the soldier dying on the field of battle, and of every sick or despised or forsaken believer, if offered in faith, are a portion of the prayers of the saints. Such prayers as those of Moses, David, Elijah, Daniel, — who looked forward through the unfolding history of the Hebrew people. That prayer of the lowly Redeemer, in which, with words that we cannot fathom, He commended His disciples to the Father. The prayers of martyrs, whereby, upon the scaffold or in the flame, they have bequeathed a legacy of blessing to the world. Prayers of missionaries, such as they offer up on quitting their native shores, and in the dark places

which are full of the habitations of cruelty. The prayers of the persecuted, — such as those of the primitive churches, those of the Waldenses in Italy, the Lutherans in Germany, the Huguenots in France, the Covenanters in Scotland, the Dissenters in England, — all these are a part of the precious store set forth before God in the golden vials. Prayers such as that offered by Robinson on board the *Mayflower*, when he committed his exiled flock to the care of a storm-controlling and covenant-keeping God; such as that which the Pilgrims themselves breathed up, when they knelt on the icy rock and implored the divine guardianship for them and their infant state. A vast number of these prayers have been answered, — some of them almost immediately, even while the saint was speaking; others after a long trial of patience and much “continual coming.” But a vast number of them also are yet unanswered; and unto this store others are joining themselves daily, going up from devout hearts like the mist from the surface of all waters, so that the “golden vials” are in no danger of being at any time found empty. In times of severe drought in nature, we know that the streams and springs which have disappeared have only been transferred to the upper air, where in due time they will take the form of showers and descend to refresh and beautify the earth. So, in the days when the word of the Lord is precious, — when there is no open vision, and the rain of spiritual blessing is withheld, — we know that the “golden vials” are gathering in what we miss below, and that, though God bears long with His elect, He is waiting only for all the tithes to come in, when He will pour out the blessing until we lack for room to receive it. The prayers of the founders and

supporters of this church, who have passed on to be nearer our common Lord; the prayers of fathers and mothers, of grandparents, and of remoter ancestors back far as we care to trace our line of descent, — if not yet answered, are garnered on high; and, so far as they might claim to be called prayers of faith, they at this moment hover above us, only waiting God's set time when they will descend upon us in showers of blessing.

How intimate, nay, how identical, the church militant with the church triumphant! They are but one kingdom — a kingdom not of this world, nor of any other world, but a kingdom which is peace and joy in the Holy Ghost; which is apprehended not by sight, but by faith; which is a thing of inward experience, not a thing of outward discovery or attainment; which is everywhere to the trusting Christian, coming into his open heart and abiding with him; but which is nowhere to the worldly and unbelieving, though they take to themselves wings, and explore the universe in quest thereof. It is one family with one Father, even God, and one elder Brother, even Christ the Saviour. We enter it, not by any natural process, but by the regeneration of the Holy Ghost. If men say "here," or "there," we go not out after them. Space and time do not condition the inheritance of the believing. It is now and here, as it always has been and always will be, to him that heareth the voice saying "To-day," and hardeneth not his heart. It is natural for us to conceive of heaven as something local, and there is a certain very precious truth in that conception. But there is also truth in that idea which dissociates it from the idea of locality. We may regard it as a place which we travel towards, and from which we are excluded in this life.

But it is not remote ; we are not shut out from it. The fault is in our vision, in our perception. Our eyes are holden. We see but dimly, not because there is lack of light, but because there is lack of sensibility in the eye of our spirit. The warm sun is around us, but the nerves of feeling in our souls are so dead that they seem chilled through and through. To say that we are getting nearer heaven, is only another form of saying that we apprehend more clearly what has always been “ nigh ” us. We speak of the saints in light as standing in the immediate presence of Christ, and of ourselves as yet pilgrims in a far-off land ; but the real difference is, that they have learned to walk altogether by faith, while we yet walk more or less by sight. We are in the presence of Christ no less than they ; nor can we, any more than they, go from His presence, though we ascend into heaven or descend into the depths, or take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea. Wherever we are, God’s hand sustains us, and His right hand doth hold us. This oneness, this nearness of all that are Christ’s ; this blending of heaven and earth in a single communion, whose centre always is everywhere, — stands out more clearly to our unsanctified minds, as we think of our petitions, uniting in one cloud of incense with the petitions of every other holy heart, and rising continually before God, with a sweet-smelling savor, out of those “ golden vials ” that contain the prayers of all saints.

But this is not all. That worship, going on always before God, not only includes the whole church, visible and invisible : it also has respect to events which are to occur on the earth. The prayers of the saints are for blessings to be bestowed, and victories to be

achieved, not in a future eternity but in time. Nearly all the grand scenes pictured to us in the Apocalypse are to be enacted on the globe we now inhabit. The holy city, the new Jerusalem, is to "come down out of heaven from God." The earth is to be purified and renewed, and God and Christ are to dwell with men. They that sleep in Jesus shall be raised, and they that are alive on the earth shall be changed at the coming of the Lord. Not in some far-off region, at an infinite remove from our planet, but here, visible to the inhabitants of this terrestrial ball, shall be the new heavens and the new earth, with no more sea. Those prayers, rising as the smoke of sacrifice ever since the dawn of time, are to be answered in the conversion of souls to Christ, — in the bringing of all knees to bow, and every tongue to confess that He is Lord; in the spreading and triumphing of the gospel throughout the world; in the purification, upbuilding, and universal dominion of the Redeemer's kingdom; when the war-worn hosts of the faithful are permitted to put off their armor and gird themselves with the garment of praise, — when from every distant shore and island, and rocky fastness and desert plain, whither the missionaries of the cross have gone to publish the glad tidings, there shall go up the joyful acclaim, "The kingdoms of the world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ." To that consummation, and everything preparatory thereto, and not to something that shall be when time is no longer, the prayers of the saints have respect. Forgetting the joys of the immortality before them, even those now standing by the throne bend downward their eyes toward this lower creation, which groaneth and travaileth in pain, and pray for its deliverance into the liberty of the sons of God.

Observe that it is the prayers of the saints, not prayers to the saints, that have so constant a respect to the welfare of our world. There is no warrant here for that popish corruption whereby the favor of God is made to be dependent on the goodwill of our fellow-creatures, — nothing to indicate that we must propitiate saint this and saint that, by building them a cathedral, or endowing a convent, or perpetual mass in their name. No spirit, whether out of the body or still in the body, that is worthy to be counted among the saints, needs to be hired to perform the blessed service of prayer. All saints pray; but they pray to God, not to one another. And all the motive and all the reward they ask is, that God would keep, through His own name, them that are Christ's, and make all men see and share the blessedness of believing in Him.

The imagery employed in the text is eminently Jewish. The writer was a descendant of Abraham. He had been accustomed all his life to the imposing Temple service established by Moses. He was familiar with the lives of the ancient believers. He loved to lose himself in long and absorbing meditations upon the wonderful history of the Hebrew nation. His cast of mind was Oriental, and the sentiment of nationality was remarkably strong in him. It was natural that his revelations, which God gave him during his exile in Patmos, should be given to the world through the imagery and types of the Old Testament. Hence we have the "four and twenty elders," — corresponding to the leaders of the twenty-four courses of priests in the Temple at Jerusalem. Hence we have the "golden vials," — not such vessels as our English word "vial" might seem to indicate, but broad, open bowls or

dishes, such as the Jewish priests made use of, which were beaten out of fine gold, and in which the incense to be sprinkled on the sacrifice was brought to the altar. Hence "the four beasts," — not "beasts" in our sense of the word. Far from it. Not creatures below us on the scale of being, but inconceivably above us. Archangels, cherubim, seraphic beings, such as are often named in the prophecies of the Old Testament, and a symbol of which overshadowed the "mercy seat" on the ark of the covenant. These super-angelic spirits fall down continually before "the throne of the Lamb," thus recognizing His sovereignty and divinity; and then, at a farther remove from the supreme glory, the twenty-four leaders of all the redeemed who worship Christ fall down with their faces also toward the throne; and every seraph, and every elder, as though conscious of his personal unworthiness, has a "golden bowl" full of odorous incense, which he brings with him, that his offering may be acceptable unto the Lamb. That incense — the prayers of the saints — strengthens the plea of each seraph and elder; so that, while striking their harps in praise of what the Lamb has already accomplished, they are also emboldened to ask for further mercies, saying, "Thou hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation, and hast made us unto our God kings and priests; and we shall reign on the earth." "We shall reign on the earth." That is the glorious result which the adoration of the Lamb contemplates. "We," — that is, those whom we represent; the saints of the Most High God; the whole company of the good, of the meek and lowly in heart, who follow Christ, bearing His cross, manifesting His spirit, doing not their own

will, but the will of their Father in heaven. Evil shall be overcome. Righteousness shall possess the earth, and the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto God. The garments rolled in blood shall pass away. In all the holy mountain there shall be nothing to hurt or destroy. The earth shall be full of the abundance of peace. And this glorious transformation — this change from confusion to order, from turmoil to tranquillity, from hate to love, from sullen enmity against God to completeness of holiness and joy — is to come in answer to the prayers of the saints ; in answer to the united and never-ceasing petitions of all who love the Lord Jesus Christ, — the petitions of every one that worshipeth the Father in spirit and truth, whether in this temple or at Jerusalem, whether yet among things seen and temporal or passed on to things unseen and eternal ; for all such are a part of the great company of saints whose prayers are forever replenishing the golden vials in the hands of the elders ; and it is such, of every nation and every degree, that the Father seeketh to worship Him.

1. Here, then, is an encouragement to all Christians to continue instant in prayer ; and an admonition, also, against refraining from prayer. Any neglect, in this particular, weakens the plea with which the elders approach the throne. They may strike their harps, but the music lacks volume if our voices be not joined thereunto. They may offer the sacrifice, but there is not enough of incense in the golden vessels to send up a sweet-smelling cloud before God. When Christians cease to pray, the supplies of the armies of God fail them. They miss their weapons, and make but feeble and disastrous fight. Then it is that their great enemy comes out against them, and they are overcome and

dispersed. If the saints cease praying, it is as if the ocean should cease sending up its vapors, or the earth its mists. The "cloudy cisterns" soon are empty in our Lord's kingdom; the heavens are brass above us, and the earth is iron under our feet, and, for want of the moisture it craves, every plant in the garden we are set to cultivate droops and decays. No divine quickenings come to the churches. We hear not the voice of penitence, nor the song of new-born souls. The ark of God withdraws behind the host, and the world stands still, or goes backward, instead of going forward to the day of its redemption. Every prayer, even the feeblest and the least, is needed to keep "the golden vials" always full to overflowing. How inspiring the thought that your prayers and mine, if put up in faith and sincerity, make but one sacrifice with those of the worshipers before the throne! How tremendous the thought that our neglect to pray weakens their argument as they approach the Lamb in behalf of this yet unpurified world! Here is a service which infant lips can perform. Here is a power, able to move the arm of God, which the lowliest maid-servant can wield. Here is an all-prevailing sacrifice, which neither the sick, nor the unknown, nor the unlearned, have any right to withhold. God cannot so afflict you with poverty and disease, and men cannot so forget you, and despise your humble lot, but that you may give, or refuse to give, a service on which the perfection of the church and the salvation of the world depend. Neglected widow, forgotten invalid, bowed and withered saint, the prayers of sincerity and faith which you are offering daily with your lips, or breathing in your heart, are all gathered as precious incense on high; they are set forth continually in the

golden vials brought by the elders to the Lamb that was slain; and as you pray without ceasing, or neglect prayer, so this world goes forward or backward in its way to the final restitution.

2. As with prayer, so also with Christian labor. This has an encouragement mighty and inspiring in the truth of the text. When the sower goes forth to sow, he knows that the strong and constant forces of nature coöperate with him, and that they will bring the seed-germs he scatters, through all the processes of growth and ripening, to a harvest. So with the laborer for Christ. All the members of the mystical body suffer with him and rejoice with him. The vast reservoir of blessing, out of which quickening influences are to descend on his efforts, is kept constantly full. The power of the prayers of the saints reinforces his labors day by day, and will render them effectual in their season. Every prayer of every missionary in the far-off wilderness or island co-works with him. The morning and evening sacrifice in all the Christian families of the world, the voice of petition and entreaty going up every Sabbath from unnumbered sanctuaries, — these, and the voice that is as the voice of many waters before the throne, hover like a fertilizing cloud above each toiling disciple; these bear up our feeble strength; these, with all their blessed power, add to the force of each Christian arm; this infinite, and constant, and everlasting help is yours, and mine, and every earnest believer's, while we go about laboring, giving, instructing, exhorting, entreating, in the hope that God's will may yet be done, even on this sin-blighted earth, as it is done in heaven. Could anything be more sacred, or girt with holier and more solemn sanctions, than the Christian pro-

fession? How vast the motive, bearing upon the weakest disciple, to be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord! What an unspeakable opportunity we slight — what an ocean of holy and divine help we set at naught — when we faint, or repine, or slacken our zeal in all pious and godly endeavors! They that be with us are more than they that be against us. We may seem to earth-bound eyes to go out single-handed to the battle, but as soon as the scales fall, and our faith looks abroad with clarified vision, we behold the mountains round about us full of chariots and horses. Who of us, seeing this great cloud of witnesses and helpers, can forbear laying aside every weight, and his easily besetting sins, and running with patience the race whose prize is an immortal crown?

3. And all these prayers and labors, filling the heavenly temple with their incense, are for you, my unbelieving brother. For you the four seraphs nearest the throne, bending evermore to the Lamb. For you the golden vials, full of the prayers of all saints, in the hands of the four-and-twenty elders, who cease not, day nor night, offering their adoration and entreaty unto Him that sitteth on the throne. When shall your single will cease resisting this great persuasion? How long — O Lord, how long! — shall it be true that the great altar sends up its sweet incense, — the prayers of your pious ancestors, of your godly ministers now on high, of your kindred and friends that remain, of the whole company of saints in heaven and on earth, who bend over you so tenderly to-day, as they ever have, and ever will till time shall be no longer, — how long shall all this be true, and you yet be found in your sins?

THE STORY OF NAAMAN, AND ITS LESSON.

So he turned and went away in a rage. — 2 KINGS v. 12.

WE do not wonder at all that Naaman was offended. He was a mighty man. He was commander of the armies of Syria, and had often seen the Israelites fly in terror before him. He came with a splendid retinue, with horses and chariots, bringing gold and silver and changes of raiment. A letter from his sovereign had introduced him to the king of Israel, and that king had sent him to Elisha; and the object of all this ceremony and display was that he might be cured of a leprosy. There he stood, with his warlike and brilliant array, before the humble dwelling of the prophet. He had it all planned in his own mind just how he should be cured. The man of God would come out; would feel himself greatly honored by such an imposing visit; would receive the truly royal present brought for him; would strike his hand upon the spot that was diseased, and then would dismiss the famous chieftain, recovered from his leprosy, to ride away in the same pompous style in which he came. These anticipations were all very natural in Naaman. But what was his reception? Elisha does not appear; he does not even invite the renowned visitor into the house. He sends out a servant to tell Naaman to go and dip himself seven times in the river Jordan. "Is this all?" we can fancy that proud warrior saying to himself. "Will not he even see me? Does not he

know that I am the great Syrian general? that I have come all the way from Damascus to be cured? that I have brought letters from my king to his king, and that his king has sent me to him? Has he forgotten that his country pays tribute to mine? Does he so disdain the costly present I have brought him, and the regal display with which I do him honor? Will he so insult my patriotism as to send me to his national river, as though there were not purer and lovelier streams in my own land?" Thus was the old soldier disappointed, surprised, and wounded in his most tender point; and "so he turned and went away in a rage."

Now do not suppose that we are repelled from Naaman on account of this sudden outbreak of passion. It the rather draws us toward him. He is indeed in many respects a model character. He acted naturally from the beginning; he came to the prophet's door in such state as befitted his position, with such presents and appointments as became a leader of armies, asking a favor. You would have felt very much as he did in the same circumstances; and to have concealed your chagrin would have been sheer hypocrisy. He showed what was in his heart from first to last; and therefore he could be trusted. He was not angered so much on his own account, but because he thought contempt had been shown for his country and sovereign, because his generous effort to show great respect for Elisha had been treated as a thing of no consequence. He was passionate, but not deceitful; he would not brook an insult from anybody, yet he was ready to converse with, and be influenced by, the humblest mortal.

There was in his family at Damascus "a little maid" who waited on his wife. This maid had been cap-

tured by the Syrians, in some of their wars with the Hebrews ; and, in accordance with the barbarous custom of the times, sold into slavery. The poor captive recollected that she had heard of a certain "man of God" in her native land, who could raise the dead and cure the most dangerous diseases ; and one day she ventured to speak her thoughts to her mistress, and thus the matter came to the hearing of Naaman. It shows how lowly was her position, and how vague was Naaman's idea of the way in which he was to be cured, that he came first to the king of Israel, supposing him to be the one who could heal the leprosy. But he did not sneer, as many would have done, at the story of the little captive. Her knowledge was very indefinite ; and she was a personage whom few in the position of Naaman would condescend to notice ; yet he listened to the report which came through her, and believed it, and made up his mind to act promptly in accordance with her suggestions. We have already alluded to the magnificent scale in which he carried out his purpose ; and also to the anger which he felt at finding his grand preparation a thing of so little account in the eyes of the prophet. But the storm did not last long ; its very violence caused it to be of short continuance. He was not the man to harbor resentment, to let his bosom become the permanent abode of ill-will and hate. That corrupt nature which he was born with, and which we possess, had its way, and now he was ready to be reasoned with again ; nor did he require to be approached by some great personage in order to be reached. He listened to his servants once more. Good advice, no matter whence it came, was never lost on him. They showed him how unwise it was for him to dictate in an affair of this kind. He

saw that he had been marking out a course of procedure in his own mind, and that he had been expecting the prophet to follow that course step by step. Hence his disappointment and the wound to his vanity. He knew that the leprosy was upon him. It had not troubled him much as yet, but it was steadily making progress in his system. He had done wrong; his treatment of the Divine message was very inconsiderate and foolish. Certainly one who could cure that terrible malady ought to be allowed to do it in his own way. "I will obey him; I will forget my expectations. I will cease demanding some great, some mysterious, some incomprehensible thing; I will follow the simple prescription; I will go and dip in Jordan seven times, since it is my only hope."

Oh, how grateful was that Syrian lord when he returned to Elisha! He had lost all his anger; he had forgotten all about nice points of etiquette. He could not go home till he had seen the prophet and poured out his thanksgivings. What did he care for methods now, since the object was accomplished? He was ready to fall down at Elisha's feet and be his servant; he would gladly stay in the land of Israel, and become a Hebrew by adoption. But the king of Syria could not spare his chief captain: Naaman must return. Yet he will renounce idolatry; he will worship Rimmon no longer. "The Lord forgive me that I must, as a loyal servant, attend my prince when he goes in to bow before false gods. And since your country cannot be my country, let me load two mules with earth taken from before your door to carry home with me, that I may look on it daily, and have it placed about me at my burial,—thus showing to all men that I have yielded my heart at least to the God of Israel."

No doubt you have anticipated my object in referring to this passage of Old Testament history. There are points in it which bear a close analogy to your own case, if you have not yet found a Saviour.

We are all the subject of a spiritual leprosy, and the business of life is to obtain deliverance from that malady. The manner in which we are to do this is set forth most distinctly in the Scriptures, and it would be plain to all men if they acted up to their convictions promptly.

The way of salvation seldom perplexes a man when he sees it for the first time presented. It is because he delays; it is because he has a natural reluctance to the duty; it is because he mingles with it much that is extraneous and speculates about it, and compares different modes of stating it, and supposes that other people's experience must be his experience, — that he becomes confused and discouraged. Has it not proved so in your case, my hearer? In boyhood, at your mother's knee, or at some other point equally sacred, you remember that the question of religious duty came distinctly before your mind. You saw just what it was: nothing in it puzzled you. You could have attended to the matter without any bewilderment, but you had certain childish schemes afoot which you saw it would interfere with, and so you postponed it. Since that time you have read and heard a great deal on the subject of religion: sermons on the sovereignty, decrees, and providence of God; on the nature of regeneration, repentance, and faith; on human depravity, — the agency of the Spirit, what God does, what Christ does, and what man does, in the work of salvation. You have heard a great many persons relate their experience; and there was always something marvelous

in it, some sudden illumination, some voice from heaven, some upspringing and overflowing peace of soul. You have read religious biographies, and accounts of remarkable conversions, in religious papers. And you have forgotten all along that these were exceptional cases; that the very fact of their being made public proved their uncommonness. They were not examples of the great mass of conversions. Hence the influence of all these things upon you, while good in one respect, was in another respect very injurious. All this various reading, and hearing, and speculating served to keep the general subject of duty to God before you, but at the same time you fell into perplexity; you lost that clear idea of what it is to be a Christian which you had in boyhood, and became entangled in a thousand non-essential inquiries. Will you not admit that you have mapped out a certain experience in your own mind? You have anticipated the way by which God would lead you into His kingdom. "I shall have so much conviction of sin," you have said; "I shall feel thus and thus toward God and Christ, and shall have such and such experiences of comfort, joy, and peace." And now you are waiting to have these fancies, for they are in a large part fancies of your own mind, made good to you. You have marked out a course, in your imagination, for the Spirit to take when He comes to save you. And hence you are unwilling to accept any aid which seems to come through a different channel. You visit the sanctuary again and again. You are like Naaman at the door of Elisha, willing to be saved, perhaps anxious to make your peace with God. But your anticipations are not met; you do not feel as you expected to; no great and new light flashes into your mind; you hear a few plain

duties prescribed which seem very much like drudgery. And so you are disappointed, offended, or disheartened. You go away and come again; and still you do not find the marvelous experience which you had looked for. And so you plod on through the weary months, lost in a wilderness of misgivings and anxieties.

Now, my hearer, are you willing to be led out of that tangled path? Will you leave those side questions and those cherished ideas as to how God must save you, if he saves you at all; and will you come out into open ground and consider what this matter of religious duty is when stripped of all that is non-essential? This is your first step. You must throw away all your anticipations of what it is to be a Christian, and stand waiting for God's direction. "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? I now give up my foolish imaginations. I have been prescribing a course for thee, rather than yielding myself to be led in such a way as thou shouldst choose for me. I have been looking for mysterious changes and for sudden ecstasies; but they have not come, and therefore I have sat still and have been vexed and discouraged. And now I am determined to come up to this question of religious duty as to a new question; to view it as I did in childhood, before it had become involved in a maze of human theories." Having placed yourself in this attitude, my hearer, let me try to bring the subject before you in the simplest form possible.

There are just two things for you to do in becoming a Christian, and one of these is simply preparatory to the other. You must see that you are opposed to God, and you must yield yourself up to God. The former of these steps is usually called conviction, and the latter submission.

Let us see if you have not the conviction. This word "conviction" is one that has troubled you a great deal. It is a technical term, and there are many such words and phrases in constant use among Christians. You hear about saving faith, about coming to Christ, about casting yourself on the Saviour, and about submitting to God. The expressions all have a meaning, but you fail to perceive it. The changes have been rung on them so long, that to your ear the sense has dropped out of them. They are hollow and lifeless. The person who uses them seems to mean something by them, but they convey no idea to your mind, and hence you deem them unintelligible, and he thinks you obstinate. Now it is somewhat so with the word "conviction." It contains an idea; it is used to designate that preparatory step which you take in becoming a Christian. But much that is merely adventitious is associated with the word in your mind. You have heard it used in various relations; you have heard persons speak of deep convictions, of terrible, soul-harrowing convictions, and you are waiting till something of this kind shall happen in your experience. I do not deny that there often are such experiences, where the heart has not as yet submitted to Christ. But they are not common: the great majority of believers have had to begin the Christian life without them; they come at an advanced stage of the journey, much more naturally than at the beginning. God does smite some down with these convictions, as he did Saul of Tarsus, but no man has a right to look for them, much less ought any to delay repentance for want of them. They are not necessary in order that you may perform your religious duty intelligently. The conviction which you have already is deep enough

to serve as a basis of action, of immediate action. You know that the great work of your life is not yet accomplished. You are not ready to die; you are not ready to meet God in judgment. And why should you require any more conviction? God will not force you into His kingdom; you must go in yourself, if at all. He has made you free. You see that you have not yet done the work; God shows you by His Spirit and truth that you have not; and now, if you wait till He shall do something more for you before you consent to do anything for yourself, you tempt Him to take from you the chance of salvation. How was it with Naaman? Did he wait for some terrible development of his leprosy before applying for help? Did he say, "I know that this disease is upon me, but it does not trouble me much yet. I can still attend to my duties and enjoy life very well; and therefore I will not try to rid myself of it till it fills me with intolerable pain"? He was too wise a man to reason thus. The danger was apparent to him, and that was enough; he took prompt measures to escape it, not waiting for some fearful torment to urge him on. How is it with yourself, when you find a troublesome soreness in the lungs, and begin to fear lest the fatal disease of our coast should fasten itself upon you? You know your danger, and that knowledge is sufficient ground for you to act on. Do you wait for the disease to become very painful? Do you say, "I shall not be convinced of my danger till every breath becomes a groan and every motion a torture"? You have no difficulty of this sort. You do not ask at what steps of the disease other people have sought relief, or whether your symptoms correspond in all respects to theirs. It is your danger; it indicates its presence in its own

way; you know that it is there, and without waiting for any more conviction, you go for the remedies as promptly as you can. So should it be in the matter of your duty to God. You are conscious that that duty has not yet been performed. This is a sufficient basis for action. Why are you not as wise in spiritual things as in temporal things? Is a leprosy or is consumption more to be dreaded than banishment from God? Will you act for this life as soon as your suspicions are awakened; and must you feel the terrors of despair before you will consent to do anything for the endless life? You have as much evidence of your sinfulness as you need to have; and now if you wait for more conviction, you grieve the Spirit, you tempt God to swear in His wrath that you shall not enter into His rest. But this is not all. The danger is, that those convictions, instead of ever becoming greater, are constantly becoming less. Have you not found it so already? Does truth affect you as much as it once did? Are you as easily impressed by the solemn providences of God as formerly? Have not the obstacles in the way of repentance, which were once slight, become broad and mountainous? Sin is a peculiar disease in this respect. It is stupefying, it puts one to sleep. The more you have of it, the less of conviction may there be. You are waiting for that voice which warns you to repent, to come nearer and ring more loudly in your ear. But it is growing fainter, it is departing, and if you cannot yield to it now, what will you do when it has died away in the distance? A dim light is shining on the path; you could enter it and trace it if you would. But you say that you must have more light; and while you thus sit still, making claims on the mercy of God, daring to demand that

He should give you more light before you use what you have, the duskiness of which you complain is fast deepening into a rayless midnight.

We conclude therefore, my hearer, that in your case the preparatory work is accomplished. You have all the conviction you need; as much, probably more, than you will have at any future time. Nothing stands between you and the great, essential thing which you are to do in becoming a Christian. God requires of you instant submission. I use this word for two reasons. It expresses the whole of your duty, and it is a word which often puzzles you. Let us see if we cannot understand just what it means in your case.

Mark, first, that it is submission to God. You must go back of all human theories; back of what I say, and of what any other man says. You must take the work into your own hands, and arise and go forward to God with it. It is at the foot of His throne that the new life of faith begins. To bring you to this point is the object of all gospel sermons, of all our exhortations, of every prayer that we put up on your behalf. These means of grace line the road to the mercy-seat on either hand; your back is toward that seat; and it is their office to turn you around, away from themselves and from everything else, to God. As soon as your attention is drawn from these and fixed solely and entirely on Him, and He hears you say, "Not my will but thine be done," He will meet you and fall on your neck and own you as His child. But you say, "Shall I not use the means of grace, the Bible, prayer, and religious instruction, and find my way to God through these?" Certainly you should use them; but the act of submission should come first.

You can make that surrender instantly. You can do it while the present moment is passing. You know that you can say honestly and with all your soul, "From this moment onward it shall be the great purpose of my life to obey the will of God. Here am I, Lord; what wilt thou have me to do?" But you are afraid, if you do make this entire surrender, that you shall not carry out your purpose. You shrink from the first step, lest you should fail in some of the subsequent steps. But do you make the matter any better by hesitating? Do you not fail of them as it is? Which is wisest, — to lose the whole certainly, or to make sure of the first one, and thereby get an opportunity to take the others? And now perhaps you have another difficulty. You could utter this now: you could say from the bottom of your heart, "At this point in my life I enter God's service;" but it seems to you much like taking a leap in the dark. You do not see the way as clearly as you like; you want to know first what it is that God would have you do. But this is wrong; it is like Naaman's fault. God says, "Make that vow to me." But you say, "No; point out the path to me, and then I will think of the vow." Are you afraid to trust God? Will He tell you to do anything that you are not able to do? Are you not perfectly safe in saying, "Lord, I here covenant with thee to do just what thou shalt require of me, though as yet thou hast not shown me one of thy commands"? No matter how much in the dark you are; how little you know of the Divine will. You must submit first, that is, place yourself under God's direction, utterly at His disposal; and then it will be time for you to learn His wishes and obey them. Do you see anything obscure or irrational

in this? It may be very different from what you have expected; but why should you therefore turn and go away offended? You have had a revelation of God's will all your life. No matter how much or how little you know of the contents of the Bible. Before you open it again, yield yourself up to it; have a solemn determination to live as it shall tell you to live. You are a child; and your Father, speaking in that book, calls you to Him. But you have refused to go to Him till He should state what He wants of you. This He will never do. You may read the Bible, but you will not understand it till after the surrender of yourself to it. Do this. Be not afraid to trust yourself in God's hands; and then He will make known His wishes; and you shall find that His commandments are all just and for your highest good. This is the starting-point. Here you must begin. You may have tried to set out from some other point; and may have been as much enraged as Naaman was, when told to make an instant surrender of yourself to the Divine control; but there is no other way under heaven, given among men, whereby you may be saved. In all your darkness, in all your confusion and bewilderment, whether you have much or only a little conviction, dropping your preconceived theories and notions, you must take this stand of absolute submission to the will of God, and then go on to learn what that will is.

Here I might stop; for it is in the performing of this act, in this placing of himself entirely at God's direction, that the sinner passes from death unto life. But let us follow him a little way into the kingdom of heaven. You have taken the Bible and said: "This contains the will of God, whom I am to obey the rest of my life. Now I open this book with such feelings

and purposes as I never had before. What it tells me to do I will perform, and what it tells me to refrain from doing I will avoid, and what it tells me to believe I will believe with all my heart; and if ever there are two courses of conduct before me, and I am in doubt which one to take, this book shall decide the question for me. I may have been wont to think that certain amusements were harmless; but now I will bring them all to this master, and if I find that it condemns them, either by its letter or by its spirit, I will drop them; if it tells me to keep away from certain places, I will keep away from those places; if it tells me to avoid certain companions, I will abandon their society. As soon as it tells me to have a place for secret prayer, I will consecrate such a place. If it says, 'Go into the social meeting and strengthen God's people with your sympathy,' I will obey the direction. If it bids me seek out impenitent friends and urge them to do as I am doing, I will hasten to those friends. Should I discover that I ought to confess Christ before men, I will do so promptly and fearlessly. Some of these duties may be hard for me; my soul may recoil from them; they may cause me to quake with alarm, and to feel that all the world is frowning on me: but they shall be performed, even to the cutting off of a right hand, or to the plucking out of a right eye; for I rely on God to help me, and He has said, 'As thy day is, so shall thy strength be.' Whatever dispositions I have, which God here pronounces wrong, I will strive to subdue; and those inward feelings and motives which this volume commends, I will cherish and cultivate all my days." This, my hearer, is the second form which submission takes. Having placed yourself at the direction of

God, you do not stop. You begin to learn what His commandments are, and as fast as you learn them you obey them. You did not know those commandments before you gave up your will to His, though you had perhaps read and studied His word for years. You did not have the Holy Spirit then, and hence the Bible was a dead letter to you. God never gives Him to any but His children, and you are not God's child till you make that first great surrender; and even then you will not have Him except as you ask for Him. In answer to your earnest petitions only will He come and make the Scriptures plain, and take of the things of Christ and show them unto you, and lead you into all truth, and conduct you onward in the way of your duties. Have you begun this work, my hearer? Then you have reached the point where Naaman stood after his servants had persuaded him to obey the prophet. Though you have turned from these duties of the Christian life hitherto, and have gone away in a rage as often as you were told to set about them, your anger has at length subsided. You have given up your will to God's. You are in the way to the river. Your heart says, "Not what I will, but what thou wilt. Show me thy way, O Lord, teach me thy paths. Give me thy spirit, that I may understand what I read; and that which I read I will obey, though it crush my proud nature to the dust."

There is a third form of submission also, which you need to consider briefly. It has reference to that joy and peace which the new convert anticipates. I fear that too much is made of these. They are no part of your duty, but are blessings which God holds in His hand. He has promised them to you if you obey Him; but He is a sovereign. He will withhold them

for a time if He pleases, and give them when He pleases. He may shed them upon you suddenly and in large measure, or they may come so gradually as not to be perceived for a long time. If you hear a new convert express great delight, remember that your experience is not to be tested by his. They that compare themselves among themselves are not wise. Let your whole soul be consecrated upon that which God gives you to do, leaving peace or trouble, joy or sadness, to come how and when and in such measure as God shall choose. Having done that which is declared to be the condition of forgiveness, believe that God is as good as His promise, that you are forgiven, that your pardon is sealed on high, and that you shall have the witness of it in God's own time and way. The best evidence you can have that you have passed from death unto life is the fact that you are striving to keep the commandments of God.

And throughout this life-long struggle you will have one great relief. Christ, the ransom for all your sins, your substitute in the court of heaven, will never fail you. When you find yourself yielding to temptation; when you detect sinful motives rising within you; when you feel almost discouraged, and fear that you shall never be able to rise above your iniquities, you can say, "I know that my Redeemer liveth." Justice does not look on me, but on Him. These failures shall not cause me to despair; for His blood cleanseth from all sin. I will never lose heart; I will struggle onward; I have made some progress; I deplore my sins; the duties which I have failed in I will yet strive to perform. For there He stands; He loves me, He helps me, He redeems me out of my iniquities; and when I awake with His likeness I shall be satisfied."

COMPLETED LIVES.

And so we went toward Rome. — ACTS xxviii. 14.

MEN often long and pray for certain objects, and hope or even expect that they shall one day possess them, while they have no conception of the hardship and suffering which the attainment of them involves. This is one secret of the many disappointed and unhappy lives which we find. It is one thing to dream, and quite another thing to make good your dream. We imagine for ourselves victories in the future, with no thought of the hard fighting by which alone we can win them; we fancy ourselves learned, or powerful, or renowned, but our hearts fail us in the very first steps of the journey by which alone the coveted height may be reached. If to wish and long and pray for good things were all the same as to gain them, there would be no beggars in the world but only princes, no wicked people but only righteous and pure, none unhappy but all satisfied and blessed. God hears our prayers, but that is no true prayer which does not take into account the means by which it is to be answered. You cannot truly say that you pray for a harvest if you do not plough the land, and sow your seed and water it. So all human wishes are utterly vain if they end merely with the wishing. Two of Christ's disciples were once dreaming of sitting, one on His right hand and the other on the left, in His kingdom. But He instantly withdrew their minds from the glittering

prize to the hard process by which it was to be gained. "Can ye drink of my cup, can ye be baptized with my baptism?" said He. You dream of glory in my kingdom, that is, but are you able to go through the terrible discipline by which alone that glory can be yours? The stern truth which Christ here uttered enters into all life, and the sooner we accept it, and begin to act upon it in all our dreams and hopes of future success, the better for us. Alas for us if we think that the high objects to which we aspire can be gained in any other way! You would like to succeed as a mechanic, an inventor, a teacher, a merchant, a lawyer, a miner, a doctor, an agriculturist; but do you know what that wish of yours means? Is the coveted thing coming to you of itself at your idle call? How bitter the disappointment in store for you, if you think so! Ask the men who are just now doing such wonders with the element of electricity whether they have toiled or not. Toiled! They have grudged the hours which they gave to sleep, and their minds have been so intent on the one object they were pursuing that other things long ago ceased to interest them. Read a little book lately published, called "The Blessed Bees," if you would know what intensity of thought and prolonged devotion are necessary to the highest success, even in the matter of supplying the market with honey. It is a book which reads a most useful lesson to every young person who would succeed in any undertaking. You envy the rich man his mansions and his warehouses, or ships or factories, or banking-houses. But while you are doing that, and before you let another murmur escape you, ask yourself if you are able to bear the self-denial, the long years of unremitting labor and of tedious

study and thought, by which he has attained his present position? You think it a fine thing to be a great statesman, a profound scholar, an astute and far-seeing diplomatist, a leader of armies, a ruler of kingdoms. But what do you think of the long and severe struggle of preparation which must go before everything of that sort? Is this painful discipline a fine thing to you? Certainly not. But until you are willing to accept it, and bravely enter into it with an enthusiasm which at length makes you love it, you may as well drop any hope of rising above the common level. The successful artist will tell you this while you are wishing that you might be a painter or sculptor. The renowned poet or musician will repeat the admonition. Wherever you go or look, all about you from the higher levels of human life, you will hear the unanimous verdict, that if you would achieve success, you must accept its conditions. You are not born successful, nor do you have success thrust upon you; the way only is open, and whatever your dream or hope may be, it will never be made good if you fear the dust and flints and the rugged steps before you.

Now we know, dear friends, that this teaching is true enough in all our earthly concerns. It does us no good to see the upward way and to long to be in it, while we indolently keep on in the downward course. And what is true of all earthly life is also true of the new life in Christ Jesus, as He showed James and John in the words I have quoted. We must drink the cup if we would gain the kingdom. We must lose our lives if we would save them. We must be buried with Christ if we would have part in His resurrection. We must be crucified with Him if we would also reign with Him. Nor let us think that what we must under-

go for His sake is only some sharp and sudden stroke. There is life-long struggle, ceaseless vigilance and labor before us, if we would fulfill any hopes we may have of honoring Him and His kingdom. In vain do we approve the law as holy and just and good, while we yield to the motions of that carnal mind in us which would bring us into captivity to the law of sin and death. In our very desire to be holy as God is, there is a willingness, so long as the desire is honest and sincere, to go through any hardship and toil which the satisfying of that desire may involve. This is the condition of all inward growth in Christian character, and of all outward achievement for Christ. If we aspire to nothing, then it is perfectly natural that we should sit still and do nothing. But if we have aspirations, even these will do us no good, they will only return upon us in disappointment and remorse, if we shrink from the toils and sacrifices which they involve. And the magnitude of the work we would do for Christ measures the amount of hardship and labor we should be willing to go through. If we wish to reap but sparingly, we need sow only sparingly; but if we would reap bountifully, we must also sow bountifully. The effort which you put forth in Christ's name, what you do and give and endure, must be proportioned to the greatness or the height of the object you would gain. If you wish to be a bright example of Christian discipleship, as we all do at one time or another, then you must shrink from nothing which lies in the way to your object. You must not be discouraged by the greatness of the way; must not faint when the journey seems to you very steep and very long. Remember it is in vain that you hope and aspire, in vain that you wish or pray that you may do some

great thing for Christ, while you are unwilling to submit to the conditions by which alone your hope may be fulfilled, your aspiration met, your wish gratified, your prayer answered. Your dream of eminent service for Christ will come down in reproaches on your head, and fill you with wretchedness and despair, if the price which you must pay for its fulfillment seems to you greater than you can afford. We hear of days which tried men's souls. My dear friend, the day which tries your soul is that in which you see a chance to do some noble thing for Christ, and the question is, Will you accept the conditions of that blessed work; will you dare to take the course in life which leads to it, to give up the ambitions and submit to the losses which lie in the way to it; or will you turn from the heavenly vision down into the tempting path where Christ never is, and in which you can do no work for Him?

Our text, describing the final stages of the last journey of St. Paul, may serve to remind us how he met this question, the trying question of every life. "And so we went toward Rome," says his friend and attendant Luke, though perhaps Luke did not realize that those were hours of thanksgiving to Paul. He was about to see the highest aspiration of his life fulfilled. Very soon after he became an apostle, the city of Rome began to fix his attention. He frequently spoke of it, and expressed the wish and purpose to visit it. His missionary travels were constantly bringing him nearer and nearer to it. He was glad to fall in with persons who came from Rome and make them his friends; and he would have gone to the imperial city much sooner than he did, had not Satan hindered him. In the whole course of St.

Paul, there is a lesson to those of this day who would give the gospel to the world. Though he despised no opportunity however small, he sought the chief centres of intellectual, social, and commercial life in which to plant the seed of the kingdom. In Syria he labored especially at Antioch, in Cyprus at Paphos, in Asia Minor at Ephesus, in Macedonia at Philippi, in Greece at Corinth. And when he failed to get a hearing at any of these places, or was mocked and driven away, as often happened, he turned only the more eagerly toward Rome. All the other cities which he visited, though capitals of provinces, were but provincial; Rome overshadowed them. Rome was therefore the true centre from which to work; if she could be converted to Christ, the whole world would be speedily Christianized. To preach in Rome, to build up a strong church there, and there to suffer and die, so that his name and work should become identified with the Roman name, was in his day a great matter. He saw this, as we in our day see how great a thing it is to have the leading nations of the earth believers in the religion of Christ. We must not neglect these great centres, which are all the time sending currents of influence throughout the world, but must give them our chief concern, as Paul gave his to Rome, if we would see the world evangelized. We may notice a threefold development of the religious life of St. Paul. First, there was his personal consecration to Christ, which cost him a sore struggle. This involved the putting away of his deep prejudices and cherished ambitions. A series of long and fierce encounters with himself and the world lay between him and the object on which his heart was set. If he had been unwilling to fight these battles and to make the sacri-

lices required of him, his fond desire would have done no good. To gain his end he was willing to make himself a pupil of one of the despised sect whom he had been persecuting. He had the courage to drop his ambitious plans, and devote three years to the study of this whole subject. You may long to be a Christian, dear friend, but you will never be one till you can accept the conditions which the step involves. St. Paul had to do this, and so must every other one who makes Christ his Master. You cannot serve two masters. You cannot serve God and Mammon. It is a great and blessed thing which you yearn for, when you yearn to know that Christ is your Lord and God, to know that He is leading you, that you are hearing His voice all the time and obeying it, that His wisdom is ordering and controlling your daily life. But to enter into this experience requires the laying down of something on your part; not so much, perhaps, as St. Paul laid down, yet something. And here is the question which tries your soul: Can you cast behind you whatever stands in the way of that Christian service which you would begin?

A second outgrowth of the religious life of St. Paul was his consecration to the preaching of the gospel among the Gentiles. His first consecration was the personal giving of himself to Christ to do whatever Christ should have for him to do. But here is a consecration to a specific work in life. Here Paul finds his mission in the world and gives himself away to it. As the springs and streamlets on the mountain sides or among the hills gradually gather themselves into one channel till they make the deep and strong river sweeping on to the sea, so his first religious impulses, and hopes and longings, grew together into this

one all-engrossing purpose. The providence of God showed him that it was to be his work in life to give the gospel to the Gentiles. His whole soul rose within him at this prospect; he accepted the office, whatever it might cost him, and thereafter he ever magnified his office. And we know a little of what it cost Paul to be the apostle of the Gentiles. As in even becoming a Christian he left his own nation, made them his enemies, gave up earthly hopes, so in accepting this apostleship he still further shut himself out from his Judaizing brethren, and exposed himself to unknown perils among strangers and idolaters. Whether he had counted the cost or not, yet nothing ever moved him to give up his mission. He was man enough to know that so great a work could not be done without hardship and suffering, and he was willing to do and endure whatever might be in store for him in it. His difficulties with Peter, and with Mark and Barnabas, with nearly all the leaders in the Judæan church, did not turn him back. If he had faltered at all because some of his brethren could not see as he saw, or because of the innumerable trials which came upon him, it would have been in vain that he cherished his high hope concerning the Gentiles: he could not have said at the end of his ministry, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day."

But besides these two consecrations under Christ, that for a general obedience and that for a specific mission, St. Paul had an aspiration or yearning somehow to identify himself and his work with the great city of Rome. He wished to plant the gospel in the

very heart of the known world, from whence its power would be felt to the remotest bounds. If this had been mere idle dreaming, or speculation, or sentiment with him, he would have never got to Rome ; for the trials which he went through in reaching the city of the Cæsars were of the severest kind. Of course, if he had chosen to go as a common traveller or sojourner, he would have had no trouble. But he would go only as the ambassador of Christ, the standard of the cross lifted up in his hands, to plant in the imperial capital that gospel of the Kingdom which was hated and feared. It was no holiday work to which the apostle aspired. His aim was a very high one. Think a moment ; nay, we cannot now understand what was then involved in bearding the mighty world-power which the gospel came to conquer in its most central and proudest stronghold. The man who would do that must have no earthly treasure which he could not willingly sacrifice, — no country, no home, no kindred or friends. Health, safety, comfort, and ease must all go. He must not count his life dear to him. Neither the perils of the sea nor of the land must have any terrors for him. And for all this, lying in the way to his supreme desire, St. Paul was ready. He feared it not, but bravely went through it from the bitter beginning to the bitter end. First his religious life had rooted and grounded itself in Christ, and then it had shot up into the noble stem and branches of his mission to the Gentiles ; and now it did not falter, but showed its heavenly origin and spirit, when the time had come for it to put forth the consummate flower. Before setting out on his last journey to Jerusalem, the apostle distinctly announced his hope and purpose. Thus far, his desire to see

Rome had been thwarted, but now the yearning had grown so strong in him that it would not be thwarted any longer. Every other hope must bend to the fulfillment of this. His determination, and the dangers which it was known to involve, gave its deep pathos to the parting with the elders at Miletus. All along on his way eastward he found his brethren full of apprehension. They felt that evil of a most serious nature was somewhere to befall him, and they naturally associated it all with Jerusalem and the hostility of the Jews. Hence their efforts, wherever he stopped on the way, to dissuade him from going forward. But he told them that he went bound in the Spirit, knowing what things should befall him. And when some besought him with tears not to go on, he said, "What mean ye to weep and to break my heart? for I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." Yet he knew he was not to die there. A greater testimony than that for his divine Master awaited him. He had an inward assurance that somehow he should see Rome, and he let the Lord, who had whispered this glad secret in his heart, lead him. He let himself be arrested by the Jews and then rescued by the Roman garrison, and then carried to Cæsarea, and then brought before Festus; and then he let himself be sent a prisoner to Rome, though he might have been set at liberty if he had not appealed to Cæsar. Ah, dear friends, St. Paul knew what he wanted. He took advantage of a law of the empire by which every accused citizen might claim to be tried in the presence of the emperor. And so, though chained and guarded, he got to Rome. He had succeeded, he had triumphed, he had reached the highest prize in life to which he had

aspired ; had reached it by longing for it, by thinking about it, by laying his plans to reach it, by dreading no trial which the fulfillment of his hope involved, by watching the providence of God and letting that lead him on toward his object. We have but a brief reference to the closing years of his life in Rome. Yet I think we can safely say that he here did the most important work of his whole career, thus justifying all his earnest desires. From this point his inspired messages went out to all the churches, and he began a work which did not stop till the whole Roman Empire had bowed to the name of Christ. There is probably no other spot on the face of the whole earth where the Christian traveler feels the spell of St. Paul's name and work so much as in that room in Clement's house in which he lived and wrought.

Thus gloriously did the life of St. Paul make good all its promise, dear friends, by his acceptance of the conditions which God had appointed. Thus only can you or I do anything for Christ, or our lives bloom out or amount to anything among men. In vain do we gaze on the House Beautiful at the top of the hill if we forget that it is the Hill Difficulty, and that we must climb it for ourselves. God will go with us up it, but what of that if we refuse to go? You may have in your heart some such aspiration, dream, or hope as that which carried St. Paul at last to Rome. If you have, whatever your vision of service for Christ may be, cherish it, be obedient unto it. Do not merely amuse yourself with it till it degenerates into weak sentiment, but look at it sharply till it defines itself in your mind, till you know what it means for you, and how you are to make it good. It is your calling of God, perhaps your high calling in Christ Jesus, and

woe unto you if you refuse Him who speaks from heaven. Or you may have no divine dream of this sort; you may not even perceive any special mission for you among men. But though your religious life lack both the blossom and the stem, yet the root of the whole matter may be in you; and this is after all the great thing for us, as it was for St. Paul. He first yielded himself to the obedience of Christ, and in the way of this obedience he found his mission and its glorious ending. In proportion as the service of his life grew nobler, his sacrifices and toils were more trying. But it tried him when he first bowed to the name of Jesus of Nazareth; nor was he without trial, he had much of it, before the more special purposes of his life were formed. Very likely there is no mission, no bright victory such as will fix the gaze of men, in store for us. There may be. We know not. Such things are not to be desired unless God has appointed them. The most commonplace and uneventful life is the best if He sends it. That it is what He appoints is the great thing. He knows, and He knows what is best. A simple life of obedience to Christ, with no sweep or splendor to it, but plain and lowly and unadmired of men from first to last, is the most blessed and precious for us when we have learned to accept it as what God gives. It is the multitude of such lives, blooming and ripening throughout the world, which are to finish up the work of such exceptional lives as St. Paul's. They are to make the businesses of the world honest, the governments of the world just, the social and domestic intercourse of the world sweet and pure. Let us ever be found doing this, dear friends, and then, if Christ means us to undertake any special mission for Him, He will show it to us; if a

bright crown is to be put on our earthly service, His providence, carefully watched and followed, will bring us to it; and whatever we may be or fail to be in the sight of men, our patient continuance in well-doing is carrying us upward along the path by which the most heroic and royal lives must ascend; and over us, as over them, are the same Divine hands stretched out, and the same words of blessing spoken, "Ye are the salt of the earth, ye are the light of the world."

THE PRIVILEGE OF SUFFERING.

Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you ; but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings ; that when His glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.—
1 PET. iv. 12, 13.

NO wonder, dear friends, that the Bible is the Book of books ; that those who have really found out and felt its meaning, only cling to it with a more determined love the more it is spoken against, knowing in their hearts that its words are the words of their all-knowing and sympathizing Father. Think or say what we will to the contrary concerning human life, its chief feature is that it is a season of suffering and sorrow, and this feature of our lives the Bible everywhere reflects, as the lakes in the mountains reflect the forms of the sombre overhanging cliffs. That blessed divine Book would not be the long record of trials and blood and tears which it is, were not such indeed the actual history of the human race. Make the most we can of the bright and joyous hours which come in our earthly lot, they are after all but whirling eddies on the dark stream ; the only true joy is that which springs from our faith in a nobler and better life beyond the present. "These sayings are faithful and true," you feel in your heart, as you read of the sin of Adam and Eve, of their expulsion from the garden to toil among briars and thorns ; "this is all true to my experience, to every man's experience," as you

read of those before the flood, whose hearts departed from God, as you see how the great patriarchs struggled and sinned and groaned. "It is true, true to all we have seen or read of history;" the long discipline, terrible overthrows, and final scattering of Israel; the hard lives and bitter deaths of the apostles; the persecutions which chased the early church from city to city. We look upon the cross of Jesus Christ lifted up before us, that most painful of all sights the earth has witnessed, in which the meaning of the whole Bible is concentrated, and we say that nothing else so profoundly as that reflects back to itself human life, whether in the race or the individual. And still there is nothing weak, nothing cowardly or merely sentimental, in all the Book. It only dares to tell us the truth, telling it as tenderly as bravely, with the purpose of making us brave to do and suffer in hope of the glory to be revealed.

This is the great spirit which comes out in our text. Peter had suffered, and God had taught him to rejoice in his sufferings, and this divine lesson he is trying to make over to his brethren who are tasting the bitterness of the life which now is. "Rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of the sufferings of Christ," he writes, echoing the high voice of all Scripture, the great and heroic words of the suffering Saviour Himself. Pain and grief, the common lot, the lot especially of the godly in Christ Jesus, are not a calamity but a glorious privilege. This is the truth which he announced to the afflicted of his day, and which should still be proclaimed to all whom the Lord visits with trouble and sorrow. We fail to understand it. Our Lord says He will give us rest if we will come unto Him; but the more we follow Him the more we

are troubled on every side. To be connected with Him in any way was not a passport to earthly peace, but to hardship and pain. It was a fatal thing to the infants of Bethlehem that He was born in their little town. A sword pierced through the soul of Mary, whose glory it was to be His mother. The trials coming on the twelve whom He chose to be with Him were so great as to bring one to the betrayal, another to the denial, as to make them all at one time forsake Him. They were imprisoned, killed with the sword, crucified for His sake, made to drink of His own cup and be baptized with His baptism. Yet He said to them, He says to all the millions who still suffer, He says to any here who think their fiery trials a strange thing, "My peace I give unto you." Ah, dear friends, it is not in the body, in the earthly experience, it is in the soul and spirit, in the life of heavenly communion which we live by faith, that our Lord Jesus gives us rest and peace. So it is all most blessedly true which He says when He invites us to come unto Him, though in the world we still have tribulation like all others, and it may be more than any others.

St. Peter does not exhort us to mirth, as though all life were a frolicsome holiday; he recognizes the elements of pain in our lives, but he glorifies that suffering by declaring that it is a holy privilege. Not only does the apostle thus transfigure pain, speaking the language of all Scripture and of the cross of Christ, but there is something within us which says Amen to his words, and the best thought and literature of the world is ever reëchoing this divine truth. It is not the books which delude us with the idea that life is a frolic, or which, on the other hand, only sentimentalize over human sorrows, it is those which both paint

the picture with sombre colors, and at the same time teach us to look straight at it with fearless hearts, which the world does not let die.

Mrs. Browning, in her tragedy of the Exiles, shows that she understood the Bible view of human trouble, where she pictures the life of Adam and Eve after their fall, making them brave to enter upon their hard lot, penitent but not despairing, Eve who had misled Adam now comforting him, feeling the wondrous truth that somehow their pain was exalting them, rejoicing in it, and, with womanly triumph over it, saying, "My sorrow crowns me." In a poem describing the blindness of Milton, but written by another poet, he is represented as saying to his God, "This darkness is the shadow of thy wing; beneath it I am almost sacred." What some of his enemies pointed to as a sign of God's anger against him he rejoiced in as an uplifting favor, bringing him "within the radiance of the sinless land," where he saw "resplendent visions," and heard "the flow of soft and holy song." The mighty Shakespeare is never mightier than while representing those who suffer most as blessed above all men by their sufferings. He has no nobler characters than those which he paints as born but to suffer. It is into the lips of one of these that he puts the words, —

"To me, and to the state of my great grief,
Let kings assemble, for my grief 's so great
That no supporter but the huge firm earth
Can hold it up: here I and sorrow sit;
Here is my throne, bid kings come bow to it."

The great authors who thus write, and whose names the world binds to its heart, do but take up and prolong the apostolic voice of triumph: "Sorrowful yet rejoicing," "having nothing yet possessing all things,"

“dying and behold we live,” “counted as sheep for the slaughter,” yet the life of Christ reigning in our mortal body. No doubt there is a special blessedness in the distress which comes upon men through their devotion to Christ and His righteous kingdom: yet the suffering which is apart from this, which comes on good and bad men alike in the natural course of things, is to be received from the Father of Lights as one of His good gifts; merely bodily pain and weakness taking us away from the active duties of life, and holding us fast while we see our strong neighbors marching to the conflict, are not to be despised, but we are to glorify God on that behalf. This seems like a hard thing to do while our poor body is one mass of torture, but it has been done by many servants of God, notably by St. Paul, who gloried in his infirmities; but above all by our Lord Jesus, who would not be kept from going to Jerusalem to suffer. It is the lesson which our text reads; and we can learn it, the strong Spirit of God helping, finding with the pain which smites us to the dust a joy which lifts us to the very heavens and right hand of our Father.

When I say that the suffering which is our common lot on earth is a privilege, I do not mean that it is in itself a good thing. No privilege is this. The only thing which is a good in itself for us is the holy and righteous character which makes us one with Christ. Suffering is a good in the sense that it gives us an opportunity to gain this character. No privilege is anything but an opportunity; and if any privilege be abused, it becomes to us, not a good, but an evil. Thus all the events of our lives come to us, each one containing two possibilities, blessing us if we take it the right way, but cursing us if we take it the wrong way.

Wealth is a privilege which makes those who know how to use it noble and honored, but which blights and destroys those who consume it on their own lusts. Whether one is born to it or achieves it, it is no good in itself to him. What is he doing with it? is the question which tells whether it is exalting him or casting him down. So of all our possessions which we are wont to call the good things of this life, — knowledge, genius, the power to think and feel and sympathize, the skill to plan and contrive, and the strength and courage to execute. They are all but privileges or opportunities. We can do ourselves harm or good with them. They are a vantage-ground to either the higher or lower nature in us. They are an unsheathed sword which will only wound us if we know not how to take them, or which, being well in hand, will bless us only as we struggle on the side of righteousness.

Now suffering and weakness, which come somewhat to all, though to some far more than others, bring with them this double possibility. They may either make better men and women of us, or thoroughly spoil us. I think some of the most selfish, exacting, patience-trying people we ever meet are those to whom this privilege of suffering has been given. Their pain is a terrible temptation, and a little experience makes us see how easily they may yield to it. We all naturally have a large charity for the faults of those called to suffer, and this charity is greatly increased by a little experience of suffering. The impulse of sympathy makes us try to anticipate their wants: we keep watch that they may sleep; we lend them our strength to save theirs; the inquiry in the morning and on the street, as their friends meet them, is for their health and welfare. For them the easiest chair, the sunniest

window, the best place at the fireside, the choicest delicacies of the table. They are not permitted to minister, but are ministered unto by all about them. Now one should not be encouraged in a spirit which resists all offers of kindness. We show ourselves amiable by accepting help when we really need it. Yet this very habit, proper enough and necessary at times, will degenerate into a selfish care for his own comfort if the invalid does not watch himself. His thoughts naturally tend to be about himself alone, while he has little thought for the comfort or rights of others. He may become a tyrant in his weakness almost without knowing it; may come to feel that there is really no exhaustion or weariness in any one but himself; be angry at any lack of alertness or sign of languor in his attendants; be petulant and ungrateful when the best they can do for him does not happen to suit his humor. Such is the path by which those who suffer much in body, or in any way which makes them dependent on the kindness of others, may go down and down till they become the most wretched and unlovely of beings. Let us not forget, dear friends, those of us who are called to suffer much in any way in this present world, that we are exposed all the time to this evil temptation. Our friends have rights as well as we; and if there be nothing else with which we can repay their loving attentions, let us at least show them, by our calm and patient way of taking what God sends, that there is nothing in suffering upon which they, too, may not calmly smile should it at any time be their lot. As many as get this victory over the pain with which they must struggle will begin to learn why it is spoken of as a precious thing in the Bible; they will not wonder why Peter told his

brethren to rejoice in it; they will easily say Amen when they hear it called a privilege rather than a calamity. We must have high moral and spiritual ideals before us, which we are struggling to realize, if we would see how sorrow and weakness and pain may help us in our struggle.

Assuming that we have this disposition, this mind of Christ which alone can make anything a real good to us, our suffering, besides uplifting and refining us, brings us into a truer sympathy with our fellow-creatures about us. One of your first surprises, whenever you suffer in a particular way, is to find how many others are suffering in a similar way. Not till you are a mourner yourself do you begin to learn that the world is full of mourners; not till you actually fall under the power of this or that or the other disease do you suspect how many victims it has all about you. Here, again, is an opportunity to widen the sphere of your sympathy. As your health made you able to rejoice with them that rejoiced, so your infirmity helps you weep with them that weep. Your suffering will do this blessed work in you, finding you full of the spirit of love, or, finding you selfish and careless of the good of others, it will make you a misanthrope. Though our pain and weakness are such aids to a sympathetic spirit in us, they are not necessary to it. As the most selfish of people sometimes are the infirm, so the most tender and self-forgetting are the strong and vigorous. We sometimes say of a person, "Ah, he cannot feel with me in my trouble, having never experienced it himself." But such a reproach may be very unjust. That very friend, who has never known your affliction in his own person, may be most sympathetic with you; and the one who has suffered pre-

cisely as you do may be wholly indifferent. You can be sure of people in these things only as you know that the spirit of Jesus Christ dwells richly in their hearts. The greatest Sympathizer the world has ever had was One who did not actually endure some of the sorest trials incident to our lot. True, it is said of our Lord Jesus that He is touched with the feeling of our infirmities, and knows how to succor us when tempted, having been tempted Himself. But this must mean His wondrous divine sympathy with us, for He never Himself underwent all that any of us are ever called to undergo. He enters into our sorrow as the mother enters into that of her child, only with infinitely more tenderness. It is said of Him that there was no sorrow like His sorrow, that He bore our sins and carried our sorrows, He was the suffering Son of God on earth; yet He did not, save by this mysterious sympathy with us, suffer many things which we suffer. We do not read that He was ever sick in all His life, or that He felt any physical pain till it was inflicted upon Him within a few hours of His death. He was hungry and weary and thirsty, yet was from first to last well and strong. How happy the first thirty years of His life in the sweet enclosure of the hills! It was the shadow of the cross, beginning to darken around Him after His baptism, which made Him a Man of sorrows. He never sinned as we all have, and hence He could not, as we do, taste the bitter fruits of sin: it is ever the great mystery of His divine sympathy with sinners, something incomprehensible to us, that He should feel Himself forsaken of God. He never felt as we do the infirmities of age, or laid wife or husband, or child or parent, or brother or sister, in the grave. Yet this strong Saviour, exempt from so much which we must suffer, sympathizes with us as

no one else ever has or can. We need Gethsemane with its bloody sweat, the mocking and scourging in Pilate's hall, the *via dolorosa*, the lacerated frame on the tree, that we may understand what our Lord's sympathy with a suffering race is. That cross measures the world's sorrow, tells us what human life really is, and how fully our blessed Saviour sympathizes in all its griefs. This final agony on Calvary is our key to the heart of Christ, but it does not make that heart, — that great heart of unspeakable tenderness and love. The infinite sympathy was there before the world was, so that He could be said to have been slain before the foundation of the world. What our Lord is, not what was inflicted on Him, makes Him so enter into our sufferings as to be the greatest of all sufferers.

But we, dear friends, are not like the infinite Son of God in our natural power of sympathy. Though we have Christ's spirit in us, we have it only according to our measure ; and when we suffer, it is more than an assurance of sympathy with other sufferers, — it widens the sphere of our sympathy, enlarges our capacity to sympathize. Thus it is, while we are yearning and struggling to be such as our Lord was, that all sorrows or pains or tribulations coming to us are like the bright angels in the patriarch's dream. We welcome their visits, for they bring us more opportunity, more blessed privilege of being such as God's own Son was, in a world of weakness and grief and frailty. Not only does our tenderness go out through a wider circle, but those who suffer see in us new assurance that we suffer with them, and thus we manifestly enter more and more into the fellowship of Christ's sufferings. This was what St. Paul especially longed for : " That

I might know Him and the fellowship of His sufferings." And of one of the early Christian fathers it is related that he had so thoroughly learned the blessedness of suffering, that when his Lord Jesus came to him in a dream, asking him what he would have in return for a long life of hardship and suffering, he eagerly exclaimed, "Lord, let me have more suffering." Yes, dear friends, it is our suffering, rightly taken and rightly used, which makes us understand the old Latin proverb, *vincit qui patitur* (he conquers who suffers). Suffering as the followers and co-heirs of Jesus Christ, we find our way as conquerors to the heart of the world. The world sees in us, somewhat as in our Lord's cross, a picture of its own spiritual condition. Just to the degree that we are weak we become strong, though poor we make many rich, our darkness is the light of the world, and the life of Christ reigns in our dying bodies.

Why should we not rejoice in our pain, and greet it as the most welcome of guests, while it is thus bringing us into a closer and truer union with the divine Friend of all men? while it is thus revealing to us, and helping us more and more to enter into, the world's sorest needs?

But let us not forget that the outward affliction can bring us no profit save as it finds in us the heavenly spirit. The feeble have advantages which the strong do not have, yet all have advantages; and as we see more and more the true nature and objects of life, we shall find that our God is, in His dealings with us, an impartial Father. He gives some of us opportunities to grow like His Son in one way, others opportunities to grow like Him in other ways. No one can be like Him in all respects, but all can be like Him in some

respect. It is necessary that some should be strong and others weak, some sick and others well, some workers and others sufferers, that some should speak and others keep silent, some minister and others be ministered unto, in order that there may be in our Lord's kingdom that variety of spiritual beauty which there is of natural beauty in the material world. All is lost upon us, and no good gift which the Father of Lights sends will be a real good to us, while no soul of goodness lives within us ; but if we are the friends of Christ, following Him in the regeneration, then, come what may of what is called good or ill in our earthly speech, it will but carry us upward and forward in the blessed way of all real good, making us sure each night, as we look back to the morning, that our loving Lord has walked with us in the way, and that our tent is pitched " a day's march nearer home."

WE ALL DO FADE AS A LEAF.

(ISAIAH xiv. 6.)

THE sacred volume furnishes many touching descriptions of the frailty of human life. What can be more vivid than the following: "Thou carriest them away as with a flood; they are as a sleep; in the morning they are like grass which groweth up. In the morning it flourisheth and groweth up; in the evening it is cut down and withereth"! And again: "He knoweth our frame; He remembereth that we are dust. As for man, his days are as grass; as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth. For the wind passeth over it and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more." Hardly less pathetic than this is the language in which Job so often bemoans his fate: "Man that is born of a woman is of few days and full of trouble. He cometh forth as a flower and is cut down: he fleeth as a shadow and continueth not." Speaking of the mighty, he says: "They are exalted for a little while, but are gone and brought low; they are taken out of the way as all other, and cut off as the tops of the ears of corn." Equally sad is the reflection of the apostle Peter: "All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth and the flower thereof falleth away."

Among these many images of our frailty, none is more striking than the one suggested by the text.

Especially at this season of the year, when vegetation is sinking into its annual tomb, — when every sound is pensive, when decay sits on all the products of summer, when the very light has grown pale, and an unseen sadness fills the air, — we feel the justness, as well as pathos, of the scripture which tells us that “we all do fade as a leaf.” The aged feel it, to whom the fields and woods are now a picture of the autumn of life. The afflicted feel it, who have laid down their best-beloved to waste with the leaves and flowers. The suffering feel it, as with painful step they totter along the pathway of time. Fading away! this is the sombre but wholesome truth which all nature is now setting before us. It may be to many of us an unwelcome truth, but it forces itself upon our notice unasked. We cannot walk out into the meadows, or stray through the forests, or look up at the sky, or listen to the hum of business, without being reminded of it. The thoughtful, brooding spirit of nature steals upon us before we are aware; the most frivolous find themselves slipping involuntarily into trains of pensive reflection. But this decay, exhibited on so vast a scale around us, is not an isolated and barren truth. It contains a lesson. “We do fade.” Man, viewed as a mortal being, is not exempt from the general doom. He is bound into a common brotherhood with the most fragile objects in nature. The Scriptures point out this connection, and trace its analogies, and enforce the lessons which it suggests. They remind us, while we are looking abroad on the sickly face of Autumn, that we are part and parcel in this fading scene. We are no exception to that law of decay which rests upon all earthly things. They fade and we fade with them. Nor is this the end of

the lesson: "We all do fade." The youngest are doomed to this process no less than the oldest; the strongest as well as the weakest; the vigorous equally with those whom disease has smitten. If there be any whom the blight has not yet touched, it is certainly waiting for them. The fairest cheek must lose its bloom, and the brightest eye its lustre. Chemistry, perhaps the most curious of the sciences, reads a humiliating lesson to any who trust in their youth, beauty, or strength. It shows them that the elements which compose their bodily frames can all be found in the clods of the valley. When our friends lay us in the grave, they do literally commit "earth to earth, dust to dust." We were all taken from the ground, and are all returning to the place whence we came. There is still another thought, suggested by the text, which it may be profitable for us to consider more especially at this time. Not only do we see decay around us, in which we all without exception partake, but this general decay observed in nature bears an instructive analogy to that which is going on within ourselves: "We all do fade as a leaf."

This analogy teaches us, first, that we fade rapidly. How brief the space which has intervened between the birth of the leaves and their death! We can hardly realize that autumn has indeed come. It seems no longer ago than yesterday that we saw the earth carpeted and curtained with the living colors of spring. If we shut our eyes, the gorgeous expanse returns. We again overlook the fields waving with verdure, and walk in the odorous groves, listening to the early songsters. One glance abroad, however, dissipates this bright illusion. The "sere and yellow leaf," the receding sun, and the chill, searching winds, remind

us that the time of the singing of birds is gone, — that we have reached the sober months, “the fall of the year.” In this short time — so short that it seems like a dream — vegetation has passed through the process of growth ; has lived and is now about to die. The genial sap stole up into the boughs of the oak and the maple. The buds started forth from every joint, swelling and bursting with increase of life. The leaves spread themselves out in the breeze and sunshine, roofing the forest and clothing every tree in green garments. All was fresh and radiant with gladness ; and if we had then, for the first time, looked on the gorgeous display, we would not have believed that it was to vanish so soon ; that, after a few short weeks, the dead leaves would strew the earth, and the trees stand like skeletons against the cold, gray sky. Nor has all this verdure lived to share in the general decay. Much of it has perished prematurely. As we walked beneath the pine-trees, even in spring and early summer, their leaves fell thickly around us. The work of decay went on with that of growth ; in the midst of life there was death. The sun, with its hot rays, dried up many a leaf before its time. Greedy fires have marched through the forest, consuming every green thing. Groves without number have been swept away by the woodman’s axe. Winter, as if coming back to be revenged for the loss of his sceptre, smote multitudes of the early buds. In field and orchard and garden, the caterpillar and canker-worm have aided the work of death. Enough, however, has been spared for the final meal ; and in this last ruthless descent of the Destroyer, we forget his previous doings. Now, do we say that it is otherwise with us ? that we live longer and our life is more

secure? Let us look. The human race is a tree; an evergreen, if you please. But the evergreen sheds its leaves as often as the deciduous tree. The only difference is, that the processes of growth and decay go on in it simultaneously. Young leaves are constantly taking the places of the old ones; and hence we do not notice their departure. Just so in society: for when one man drops away another steps into his position; and thus Death, by filling every gap as soon as he makes it, conceals his work. Once in about thirty years the tree of humanity sheds its leaves. Those which fall before reaching this age vastly outnumber those which live beyond it. And if here and there a few keep their hold for threescore or even fourscore years, they are nevertheless soon cut off, and they fly away. There is no such thing as long life on earth, though we sometimes say of a man that he has reached a good old age. The Bible, accommodating itself to our poor way of reckoning, uses similar language. But after all, we go swiftly to the tomb. We feel that the patriarch who had lived to be a hundred and twenty years old was right when he said to Pharaoh, "Few and evil have the days of the years of my life been." A century will not seem much to us when we look back upon it from eternity. They have no dial-plates there; no days and nights, no autumns, no periods, but one endless duration. How much of our early life has faded from memory! There are months and seasons which seemed long to us then, but they are as nothing now. If we strive to recall them, we find that they have utterly gone from us. And many an hour which we have enjoyed since the leaves last appeared has fled forever. But the shortest of those hours, if compared with this present life, is

longer than a century compared with the eternal ages. When we begin to float away on that shoreless ocean, time, like some little island, will soon sink out of our sight. We shall esteem it as less than nothing, and vanity. The past will disappear like a bird flying away into the blue ether. It will vanish like a swift ship on the distant rim of the sea. We shall learn how frail we were; that the measure of our days was very short; that life was indeed no more than a span.

This analogy teaches, secondly, that we fade imperceptibly. The leaves are not withered all at once, but gradually. Though they live but a few months, yet their life ebbs away with an even flow. We cannot see the exact moment at which their color begins to change. That there is change we know well, but we cannot watch the process as it goes on. We look at the leaf, and while we look it is fading, but somehow the work of death escapes us. Its decay is rapid, as was its growth, and, like that, is imperceptible. This fact holds good, even to a greater degree, in our own case. We can mark the fading of the leaves by comparing their hues at short intervals. The experience of many seasons has taught us to expect their death. The decay to which they are subject is something external to us. But we fade by an inward process. Our eyes are turned away from it; it is silent and deeply hidden. If any of us have lived to be old, they cannot mark the point in their life at which age began to steal upon them. The step was so stealthy and noiseless that they did not detect it. They know that they have changed, but it has not been a change which they could trace from day to day. Their companions have changed with them; and this serves to heighten the illusion. Instead of feeling that they

have grown old themselves, they are apt to think that young people appear more youthful than formerly, — that the broad space between them and the rising generation is caused by children being more childish than they once were. They slip away from the shore so smoothly that they think they stand still, and that it is the land which is receding. While the stream of life bears them on, they are unconscious of motion ; and its enameled banks seem to them to be gliding away behind them. They are deceived, just as we all are about the earth's motion. We know that it revolves, but we cannot realize the fact. Everything on its surface moves with us, and hence there is no means of marking our progress. We sweep through the air almost with the speed of lightning ; but all objects around us keep their positions with respect to each other, and therefore we cannot see that we move at all. If we look up to the heavens, we say that it is they and not the earth which revolves. It is the sun which rises and sets, and which goes from solstice to solstice. It is the constellations, not ourselves, which turn nightly in the sky. Thus it seems to us ; but we know that we are deceived. And in like manner we move on toward our graves. We sometimes say that we are getting near our lowly bed ; but then we do not realize what we say. Death seems as far off as ever. We are still laying plans, and thinking to ourselves that to-morrow shall be as this day. If we were told that our life would close before another morning, the announcement would surprise us, just as much as a like announcement would startle the joyous child. We do not perceive the approach of the chill messenger. He steals over us like some magnetic sleep. The twilight deepens with so even a step that we do

not believe the night is drawing near. Ah, how Death plays with his victims! He mocks us all alike, doing his work so stealthily that we ever imagine him at a distance; letting us fill up the full term of human life, and then hurrying us away in such an hour as we think not of.

This analogy reminds us, thirdly, that we fade utterly. The display of colors which the forests now make is indeed charming. Neither spring nor summer has anything to be compared with it. The landscape seems to have been converted into one vast painting, on which the artist has lavished all his taste and ingenuity. Every color and every shade of the many colors seem to have been poured out around us in most costly profusion. The deep crimson, the purple, the delicate pink, the pale and the rich golden-yellow blend with each other, and with still other dyes, into all imaginable tints, mingling often into pictures the most gorgeous, and of inimitable beauty. Such is the painting which God hangs out before us, by the side of which all that human genius can do looks mean and contemptible. But He will in a few days withdraw the picture. We must look while we have a chance, for the exhibition will soon be over. The many-hued leaves are dropping down, and the rain is beating them to the earth, and soon the frost will stiffen them, and the snow cover them out of sight. They will not reappear in the spring, but their places will know them no more. They will turn dark, and crumble, and lose their distinctness of form, and mingle together in an undistinguished mass. The wild-flowers will spring up through new-made loam, and the ploughshare will turn it up to our view; and as we walk over it, we shall have no remembrance of the

leaves which once played so beautifully in the setting sun.

And is it so with man? It is indeed so with mortal man; with the life which floats away on the sound of the passing bell. There is no respite, and there are no exceptions. Think not that the lovely forms, which we have laid down in the grave since the birds last sang, will moulder alone. Other leaves are falling. We shall soon be by their side. The spade will ere long round the top of our lowly bed, and that will be the end of us as inhabitants of earth. Exhortations to repent will not trouble us there. We shall hear no more rebuke of our sins; there will be no more Sabbaths to break or sanctify, no duties to perform, no works of mercy and love. They who come after us will forget our looks and our deeds; yea, our names will utterly pass away; and other generations, as frail as we, will come and go, and it will be with us as though we had never existed. A few friends may cherish our memory. We may, by our generous labors, cause those who come after us to recall our names gratefully through many ages. But this does not alter our fate; for we know that the monuments shall crumble, that literatures shall perish, and that the scroll of history itself shall vanish away. And is there no means of averting this doom? Must man, who so thirsts for immortality, lie down and rise not till the heavens be no more? Such is indeed the sentence which we have incurred by our sin. There is nothing in nature which teaches otherwise. This is the sad conclusion to which man's reasonings lead. If there be not some other One greater than we, some blessed Potentate who hath immortality in Himself, we see no chance of escape. "By one man sin entered

into the world, and death by sin; and so death hath passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." This is the decision, — gloomy and terrible, but final. And here we close the book of Nature, gladly looking away from her stern teachings, to see if there be not some comfort for us in that other volume which has come down to us from the Father of Lights.

Ah, Nature! thou hast told us the truth; for, as we glance along the blessed leaves, we read that in Adam all die. But thou hast not told us the whole truth; for we also read that in Christ all shall be made alive. Thou didst show us the gloomy front of the cloud, but didst not turn its silver lining out to our view. Thou hast turned to us the dark side of the picture, on which we saw the forms of suffering and death painted; but we have come round to the bright side of it, and, lo! blessedness and life appear. Now we know that there is One who doth not break the bruised reed; who is very pitiful and of tender mercy; who, though He remembereth that we are dust, pitieth us as a father pitieth his children, and desireth not our death, but that we may find life in Him. "In Christ all shall be made alive." His blood, poured out in the earth, has stayed the progress of decay; and there shall be a resurrection both of the just and of the unjust. Our bodies and souls have been corrupted with sin; but far within lies a germ which shall live when they perish. This is the image of God, the seed of an immortal person, in which we shall be raised up at the last day. Here, then, we have the whole process depicted; not only the decay, but the renovation. The sentence of Nature is not softened, but there is a hope beyond, gilding the gloom, which she did not unveil.

The lesson of humility is still here, and we take it

home to our hearts. We have abused and forgotten that in us which is to live forever. What we naturally pride ourselves on is yet frail and fleeting. Our glory and honor must be laid in the dust, and the worm shall eat them as wool, and our beauty shall be consumed. We find no language too strong, no imagery too vivid, in which to paint the frailty of that which we now call ourselves. We long to heap epithet upon epithet, and add metaphor to metaphor; for we all do fade as a leaf, and the pomp and might and excellency of the earth are going down with us to the tomb. Make us lowly before thee, O Father, for we are crushed before the moth; and keep us from trusting in man, whose foundation is in the dust.

But "he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." We thank Thee for those words, Lamb of God, for many of our pious friends have already faded and disappeared. They have been taken away from our firesides and bosoms; we call out for them, but they do not answer; their portraits smile upon us from the walls; and we steal away often to look at the garments which they were wont to put on. And their empty seats, and the silence in the halls never broken by their footstep, remind us that they are not here. But they have risen; and they walk in white, for they are worthy. We do not know why God afflicts us; but they know, and they are comforted concerning us. They know why the good die first, while they whose hearts are dry as the summer's dust burn to the socket. They know why such as Brainard, and Lyman, and Henry Martyn were taken away so early. They know why Alexander, and Cæsar, and Tamerlane were permitted to ravage the earth. Pascal, and Cowper, and Robert Hall are there, and they

see at length why God afflicted them so in their lifetime. It is well with our Christian friends who have faded. They have faded into the life which never fades; and when they shall be permitted to receive us into their white-robed company, their joy will be full. And the little ones, too, they are yet alive. You wept to see them fade before you durst hardly call them your own, for they dropped like early spring-buds; and you gathered them up, and laid them away, sorrowing that you should see their faces no more: for you could not understand why Death should be allowed to touch those sweet forms which had never been stained with sin. But they understand it, though they are but little children. They are learning to interpret and to love the ways of God, and studying those mysteries which the angels have a desire to know, and looking into plans which baffle the wise and prudent of this world. And we thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, since thou hast seen fit to hide these things from us, that thou art revealing them unto babes: even so, Father, for so it hath seemed good in thy sight.

But what shall be the end of those who have sinned and will not believe? Ah, my friends! you are fading rapidly, imperceptibly, and that which you now take delight in will soon have vanished utterly. It is not mawkishness in me to tell you this, for it is the truth. Nor is it a truth for the sick and weak-minded only. It is for you, the strong man; for you, the ambitious and dashing youth. Your little life will soon be over, and you will drop like the frailest leaf; and if you are not in Christ, you will awake to shame and everlasting contempt. Nature teaches you this, but revelation teaches you how to avoid such a doom.

Ye know whither Christ has gone, and the way to Him ye know; but ye will not come unto Him that ye might have life. A few more days of hesitating, and ye shall die in your sins; and then where He is, thither ye cannot come. And ye shall be as tares, which are gathered from among the wheat in harvest time, and men bind them into bundles, and they are burned.

Since the dwelling-place of sinful and imperfect creatures is so beautiful even in its decay, what must heaven be! God is a being of perfect wisdom, always bestowing His care in proportion to the value of the things which receive it. This is the argument which our Saviour used when He endeavored to comfort His disciples. Not a sparrow falleth on the ground without your heavenly Father, and ye are of more value than many sparrows. If God so clothe the grass, which to-day is and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall He not much more clothe you, who are His redeemed children? And so, if He has made this house which fadeth as a leaf so lovely, He will give proportionate beauty to our eternal home. This is a world which sin hath blighted, and in which every comely object soon passeth away. But see how He has arrayed it! A wilderness of charms still remains. He has built it on a foundation of gold and sapphire, and fretted its broad blue dome with golden fire; into its green carpet He has woven the lily and the violet; and He has curtained it with the swaying groves, in which the robin and the nightingale have their home. He has made the human form surpassingly graceful, and thrown upon its face somewhat of the light of His own countenance. We look abroad, and are amazed at the prodigality with which He is now adorning the

landscape. What gorgeousness, what delicacy, what taste, we see beaming from every hill and field and forest, over which the very clouds seem to be dreaming in wonder, and not a nook or corner of which escapes the curious sunbeams! And yet this is only a brief exhibition of His power. He will soon change its countenance and send it away; in a few short days Nature will be bereft of her glorious garments, and present to us only a wide waste of dreary and lifeless forms. Who, then, shall attempt to describe that world where there is everlasting spring, where the leaves do not fade, nor the flowers wither, and where we ourselves shall be clothed in immortal youth? Thus far we have come in our contemplations, but we would not seek to go farther. We pause at this point, where even Inspiration lays down her pen; for eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him.

SICKNESS AND ITS LESSONS.¹

Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of Mercies, and the God of all comfort ; who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them who are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God. — 2 CORINTHIANS, i. 3, 4.

How affectionately the apostle treats the word ‘comfort’ in this passage! Like a mother playing with her child, which she clings to and cannot let go, he clasps it to his heart again and again, drawing it back into his embrace as oft as he feels it escaping, and caressing it with a fondness which seems farther from satisfaction the more it is indulged. The God of comfort comforteth us, that we may comfort by the comfort wherewith we are comforted. Five times in the same breath! A stream whose fountain-head is the God of mercies, whose banks and channel are his own tribulation, whose final receptacle is the hearts of them that are in trouble! The one sweet thought is so breathed through the utterance, and poured over every phrase and syllable, as to make it seem like a bunch of asphodel just culled from the gardens of immortality.

This pastor of the Corinthian church, so far from murmuring or repining amid his troubles, “blessed” God for them all, “even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,” interweaving that “Name of names”

¹ Preached December 13, 1863, upon recovery from a dangerous illness.

as if to remind himself that no disciple can be a sufferer in comparison with the suffering Son of God. He blessed God, not on his own account only or chiefly, but more especially on the behalf of his brethren, who, he considers, are to reap some of the richest benefits of his afflictions. So possessed is he with the one purpose of being useful to other men's souls, that he rejoices in his calamities, not so much for any fruit they may bring to himself as for the greater fitness they work within him to be a minister of truth and consolation. He gloried in his infirmities, — his "thorn in the flesh," his stammering speech, his inferior personal presence, — if thereby the grace of God might more abound unto any. Was he afflicted and delivered unto death? he reminds the Christians at Corinth that it was for their sake; "it is for your consolation and salvation." Was he brought down to the edge of the grave (apparently by sickness)? he says: "We were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life; that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God who raiseth the dead." He couples even the kindness of his friends with his own suffering, and reckons it all as so much good seed sown for their advantage, saying, "Ye also helping together by prayer for us, that for the gift bestowed upon us by the means of many persons, thanks may be given by many on our behalf." Not loss, but gain; gain not only to himself, but to the church which he served in Christ's name, was what he desired, and what he had already found, in his affliction.

How free and unstudied the intercourse of Paul with the Corinthians, as brought to view by this scripture! None of that unwillingness to talk about him-

self and his private experiences, — that affectation of modesty than which few things can be more immodest. He is all unreserve, childlike simplicity, and open-heartedness ; for he knows that there is no bitter feeling in himself, and also that his most secret thought will meet a waiting sympathy in them. None of that worst form of egotism, — that pride which is too proud to speak of itself, that egotism whose veil is silentness, which is found in cautious maturity but never in little children, of whom is the kingdom of heaven ; none of this in the free-speaking teacher, who tells his beloved flock all about “ the trouble which came to him in Asia,” recognizing it as a common sorrow both to them and himself, and believing that God meant it all for a common blessing.

Such is the great example under whose protection I might stand this morning, while speaking of God’s dealings with me through the last summer and autumn, were I not sure that your own welcome of such speech will be my only needed protection.

The first impression one has, upon waking from the long delirium of fever, is very wonderful. Consciousness comes like a stunning blow upon all his sensibilities ; there is a sudden paralysis both mental and physical, and he lies upon his sea of pain almost indifferent to his fate, like a ship which some mighty wave has struck, leaving it a helpless wreck on the waters. He is prostrate, dumb, nearly bereft of sense and feeling. Then from this strange stupefaction there is a sudden swing into the opposite extreme. The taste, the touch, the hearing, the eyesight, become painfully acute. A flower anywhere near is at once identified by its strong fragrance, the faintest line of the pic-

tures on the walls is distinct and prominent, no whispering of attendants can be so low as to escape detection, and the beating of a child's drum in the street is like the rapid firing of artillery. Such is the tension of the sensibilities that one look of kindness may excite floods of tears, and the smallest inattention, whether fancied or real, is often felt as a cruel injury. The heart almost breaks with impatience, and a feeling of bitter neglect, during the long hours which seem to pass between the expression of a wish and its gratification. The ice and water are miles away from the sufferer; and he asks, when the bit of toast appears, if they had to "raise the wheat" before making it. Then succeeds a feeling of awe, as the patient becomes strong enough to hear how many weeks have dropped out of his life, — when he can bear to be told that his recollection of endless wanderings over torrid seas, and of desperate struggles to escape from cruel foes and reach a home that seemed to fly before him, is only the memory of a dreadful dream; when he may safely learn, though to his utter astonishment and against his clearest convictions, that certain great events in the world have not taken place; when he first gathers, from various remarks dropped around his bed, that he had so far ceased from among the living as to be numbered with those who inhabit silence. This feeling of awe is for days uppermost and oppressive. The invalid resembles soldiers just out of battle, sobered into speechlessness by the near vision of what they have passed through. He perceives that his feet have stood within the gates of eternity, and that he has looked on the Face which few are permitted to behold and live.

After this season of intense vitality and wonder,

having become used to its dread experience, the mind relapses into a more passive state. Then, as I now remember, the luxury of convalescence begins. One is so aware of his weakness as to feel it no trial, but the rather a pleasure, to be treated like an infant. There is just enough of restoration to lie still, and breathe, and be moved about, and amused with present trifles. I can never forget this stage of my recovery. The sick-chamber was as large a world as my energies required, the smallest matters completely absorbed me, the passing moment was so large that I hardly thought of either the past or future. It must have been under such an experience that the Psalmist said, "Thou renewest my youth;" that so many have said, with Hugh Miller, "After long seasons of sickness, childhood seems to come again." I found in the commonest objects and events a delight before unsuspected. Inspired texts, and fragments of familiar hymns, came to me with such peculiar sweetness as to excite smiles of pleasure; and the calm tones of a human voice, or any half-heard strain of music, filled me with pure gladness. It was during this experience, and as my faculties waxed stronger, that it seemed to me I could understand how Richard Baxter was moved to write so sweetly of the Everlasting Rest, — how Edward Payson could say, "When I formerly read Bunyan's description of the Land of Beulah, where the sun shines and the birds sing day and night, I used to doubt whether there was such a place; but now my own experience has convinced me of it, and it infinitely transcends all my previous conceptions." I shall never recall some of the earlier days of the autumn just gone, without believing that I may justly claim to know how Peter felt in the mount when he

said, "It is good for us to be here; let us build three tabernacles, Lord, one for thee, one for Moses, and one for Elias." But Transfiguration scenes cannot last always. It is the office of a pious memory to preserve them; to hang them up in the picture-gallery of Christian experience, where they shall admonish and cheer the toiling believer. With a soul thus attuned, and still dwelling apart from earthly disturbance, you will easily comprehend how much I enjoyed on that fair October morning when I sat in this pulpit, — having entered no other, nor worshiped publicly, save in tents or beneath the open sky, since standing here more than a year before, — you will judge at once, I say, what sacred pleasure the hour afforded me, nor wonder that my heart kept repeating, as I listened to the choir and the minister, and felt the spirit of the place, "There are no songs like the songs of Zion, there are no words like the words of Jesus, there is no house like the house of God." The clouds and darkness round about me, which had been gradually turning out their silver lining upon the night of my affliction, now blazed suddenly with a celestial splendor, like those floating about Alpine summits, of which Professor Tyndall says: "They were very grand, — grander, indeed, than anything I had before seen. Some of them seemed to hold thunder in their breasts, they were so dense and dark; others, with their faces turned sunward, shone with the dazzling whiteness of the mountain snow; while others again built themselves into forms resembling elm-trees loaded with foliage. Towards the horizon the luxury of color added itself to the magnificent alternation of light and shade. Clear spaces of amber and ethereal green embraced the red and purple cu-

muli, and seemed to form the cradle in which they swung. Close at hand squally mists, suddenly engendered, were driven hither and thither by local winds; while the clouds at a distance lay like 'angels sleeping on the wing,' with scarcely visible motion. Mingling with the clouds, and sometimes rising above them, were the highest mountain-heads, and as our eyes wandered from peak to peak, onwards to the remote horizon, space itself seemed more vast from the manner in which the objects it held were distributed." There is a Mont Blanc in Christian experience, and I am grateful for the belief that my feet were permitted for a little while to stand on its apocalyptic summit.

But now, as returning health brought me nearer to the activities of life, and I beheld the duties which must ere long — though not so soon nor so fully as I had hoped — be resumed, misgivings began to mar my peace. There was a reluctance to undertake again the work of a pastor in Boston, — work so manifold, and so exhausting, if one attempts it all with a purpose to do it well. I wondered that I had ever dared to try it, and that it had not crushed me long ago. This dread, and expectation of failure, became so oppressive that life at times seemed hardly desirable. In my ingratitude to God, I murmured that He had not permitted me to die, when dying would have been so much less painful than it was to get well. Struggling against this sinful fear, and gradually subduing it, I trust, was the remembrance of God's faithfulness. Would He, who had so wonderfully succored me in the past, forsake me in days to come? I knew that it is always safe for a man to be where God places him, and to go about the labor which God appoints; that the strength will come in the day when it is

needed ; that He who gives dying grace will also give grace for the life which He marvelously restores ; that there can never be any failure, but only victory, now and always, to him who makes God's will his own. Aiding these suggestions of faith, was the desire to be actively associated once more with those whose kindness had so abounded to me and mine ; whose strong crying unto God had moved His everlasting arm ; who had spoken so comfortingly to her whose hope was ready to perish ; who had sought out for me the choicest gifts of the garden and conservatory, and taken care that no want of the sick-chamber should be unsupplied ; who took to their own homes those too young to see suffering ; who stood, through weary and breezeless nights, over one all unconscious of their ministering. Gratitude to God for these friends, who thus cared for one not a long time their neighbor or pastor ; his boyhood passed in a far-off valley unknown to fame ; his only church and Sunday school, throughout that period, a Christian home ; literally, here, a stranger in a strange land : yet coming from the wilderness to this far-famed Zion ; venturing into such a blaze of intellect and culture as this city is renowned for ; preaching the truth as he learned it from the Scriptures, in times so likely to make it an offense unto many, but listened to, borne with, cheered on, and seconded more and more yearly : his desire from the first, in the long struggle now sprinkling the land with blood, to take such a position and so perform his part as to be worthy of the past, and leave a good example to the future, not obscuring but honoring, and if possible making brighter, that history which you as a church so justly revere ; this desire, imperfectly carried into action, shamed by so many greater

sacrifices, even unto death, as the absence of some faces and your mourning apparel remind me to-day; this desire, as I know at length, appreciated and aided in the expression, — gratitude to God, I say, and the wish not to show a base distrust of those who have so generously befriended me, are an admonition to be persuaded, by this signal experience, to go with alacrity and joy about the duties of the future.

The lessons of severe sickness are numerous and various. Of these I will venture to name a few, which seem appropriate to the instructions of the sanctuary.

1. We should learn from such experiences that our life is a treasure which belongs to God. I say, *we* should learn, for nothing singular or uncommon has happened to me. All who have lived to maturity can remember times when God's own hand was interposed to snatch them from death; some hair-breadth escape or mysterious deliverance, or a return to health from the cold shadow of the grave, when it seemed that no human help could avail. I know that God shows His goodness more, and may claim a larger gratitude, where He has not permitted the calamity to come; but so thoughtless are we that the gift is seldom viewed rightly, until, having been despaired of, we receive it anew. Especially may this blessed view be obtained where one's weakness is so great, and his recovery so gradual, as to withdraw him for a considerable time from distracting affairs. It is the soul meditating and praying alone, under the canopy of its trouble, which sees that the afflicting and the redeeming hand are the same, and which learns to say with Pascal, in that memorable prayer: "Grant, O my God, that in uniform equanimity of mind, I may receive whatever happens; since we know not what we should

ask, and since I cannot wish for one thing more than another without presumption and without setting myself up as a judge, and making myself responsible for those consequences which Thy wisdom has justly determined to conceal from me. O Lord, I know that I know but one thing; which is, that it is good to follow Thee, and evil to offend Thee. Beyond that, I know not what is better or worse in anything. I know not which is more profitable for me, sickness or health, wealth or poverty, or any other of the things of this world. This is a discovery beyond the power of men or angels, and which is veiled in the secret of Thy providence which I adore, and which I do not desire to fathom."

When God takes a life and suspends it over the abyss, letting it down into the sides of the grave until it disappears from human sight, or drawing His dark pavilion around it, and flying away with it into we know not what secrecy, — if He then restores that life to its place among men, the impress of His ownership is too plain upon it not to be seen; it is His, and should be devoted to the glory of His kingdom, as He has shown by doing with it as He willed. Sending back that life, after friends have once yielded it into His hands, teaches that He has something still for it to accomplish on the earth. Thenceforth it may serve no other master, nor engage in any unholy labor. It is God's own offering to humanity, as really so as the gift of His eternal Son. It is a life sent into the world to carry forward His merciful purpose, to be the servant of righteousness and holiness, not conferring with flesh and blood, but ever with the Spirit which giveth wisdom. It is a life consecrated to whatever God looks on with pleasure, and desiring no

earthly inheritance, but content to know that a building not made with hands awaits it in the heavens.

Said Robert Hall, that prince of modern preachers, and an eminent sufferer, having just been restored from the gates of death: "I wish to bow with the deepest submission to that awful, yet I trust paternal, Power which, when it pleases, confounds all human hopes, and lays us prostrate in the dust." And again, writing to the same friend, after a dangerous illness, he says: "I am more and more convinced that nothing deserves to be called life that is not devoted to the service of God; and that piety is the only true wisdom. But, alas! how difficult it is to get these lessons deeply impressed on the heart, and wrought into the whole habit of the mind!" Oh, my friends, who have at any time looked within the veil, let us ever hearken to the voice pursuing us out of that thick gloom, saying, "Ye are not your own, for I have redeemed you;" and may it be our unbroken and full consolation henceforth, that, whether living or dying, we are the Lord's!

2. Severe illness should open to us new views of the sympathy of Christ. That sympathy is wonderful, and to us incomprehensible, — as we feel more and more, the more our own sphere of sympathy is enlarged. Dr. Chalmers, wishing to show that increase of knowledge deepens one's conviction of ignorance, drew a white circle on a blackboard and said: "The larger you make this circle of the known, the more of the unknown will its circumference touch." So, as our hearts expand, we become more conscious of that Infinite Heart which surrounds us all. We touch it with a broader circumference, and look off upon it from more advanced points, only to discover that it

is without a shore. Each new experience of sorrow widens the circle of our sympathy. That trouble, increasing our magnetic power, draws to us many who have experienced the same. There is a larger fellowship of hearts, and a new discovery of human woe.

But the tenderest spirit soon learns how little it can know or share of the anguish about it; and so contemplates with ever-increasing wonder that sympathy which feels all the pains we bear. Though reason stands aghast at this truth, yet practically it is confessed by all Christian hearts. Whenever or whatever we suffer, the words of the Man of Sorrows are most powerful to soothe and sustain. If we are tempted, we love to think first of all on His temptations. If we are desolate, He had not where to lay His head. If we are forgotten in any extremity, His disciples slept during His agony. If we are avoided by a truth-hating world, He passed, "a lonely stranger," through life. Gethsemane turns all our shadows into morning, and our bitterest crosses are lost and swallowed up in His. Every other tie may perish, every other love prove false, but His is a sympathy that never fails. No indifference can chill it, no time can weaken it, no sorrow can exhaust or transcend its healing power. The woes of all the world are but a slight elevation from which to behold a little of that love which passeth knowledge. And hence, considering the variety of mortal experience, — every life having in it a sorrow which earth cannot heal, — there is no hyperbole, but only calm and literal statement, in those Scriptures which teach that a Christian hope is the pearl of great price, and that all other riches are wisely spent in purchasing the riches of a conscious and constant fellowship with Christ.

3. Sickness, attended with delirium for several weeks, has confirmed my faith in the immortality of the soul.

I speak not now of the resurrection of the body, that separate wonder. Of this we find no instance, but only a few imperfect analogies, in nature; and in proof of it we must rely on the historic fact of Christ's resurrection, together with His miracles raising the dead, and on certain teachings transcending reason, given by the apostles as the Holy Ghost moved them. The resurrection of the body is a solacing truth which Christianity alone brings to our notice; the immortality of the soul is a truth taught by reason without inspiration.

Insanity seems never to have been rigidly defined. No prudent person would undertake to say just where it begins. Perhaps the wisest opinion we can hold respecting it is, that all men are more or less insane; differing not in the fact, but only in degree, and destined to bear the infirmity until death shall be swallowed up of life. Some may be afflicted with this unsoundness to an extent which renders them irresponsible for the time being; in others it may amount only to what is called eccentricity, in which cases it can and should be controlled by a Christian determination. But it is apparent to me now, that insanity, while disordering those faculties which connect us with the outer and passing world, does not reach the highest powers of the mind. Reason is not dethroned. If her conclusions are wild, that wildness lies in the impressions which she is obliged to take for her premises, not in the logic by which she carries them to their results. As a discovering faculty, "her looks commercing with the skies," she

still recognizes the supremacy of goodness, and brings every act reported by the senses to that divine ordeal. It is in the senses, in that mortal organism which conveys external and conditioned facts to the mind, that the disease resides. The judge on the bench decides according to evidence; it is the witnesses that are at fault if the verdict be unjust. The insane man adheres obstinately to his conclusions, for he has reached them logically, and it is impossible to show him that his premises are false.

Since, then, the disorder is all in the sensuous part, and the purely spiritual faculties act as calmly and unerringly as ever in their own proper sphere, we infer that these are never reached by weakness or decay. Exempt from the fate of that organism through which they manifest themselves here, they abide in undiminished vigor, waiting for that glorified body which shall never falter in the service of their high demands. The acuteness of a delirious person, the desperation with which he pursues his train of inferences, his ingenuity in parrying objections and marshalling proofs, the indignant surprise with which he listens to contradictions, — all this ought to teach us, and I wonder it has not before now, that the action of the spirit becomes more godlike as the senses fail, and that it rings out and proclaims, through these “jangled bells,” the great truth of its immortality.

4. So near an approach to death has shown me the wisdom of being ready always for the life which is beyond death. To-day is the day of salvation. The command, “Set thy house in order,” comes to us while our faculties are yet clear and healthful. We cannot be certain of anything which is undertaken amid the throes of dissolution. There is one, but only one — the thief on the cross — of whom we may positively

say that he was turned from the power of Satan unto God while dying. How the heart of the poet Cowper yearns toward a deceased friend of skeptical opinions in the following extract from a letter to John Newton: "But perhaps he might be enlightened in his last moments, and saved in the very article of dissolution. It is much to be wished, and indeed hoped, that he was. Such a man reprobated in the great day would be the most melancholy spectacle of all that shall stand at the left hand hereafter. But I do not think that many, or indeed any, will be found there who in their lives were sober, virtuous, and sincere, truly pious in the use of their little light, and though ignorant of God in comparison with some others, yet sufficiently informed to know that He is to be feared, loved, and trusted. An operation is often performed within the curtains of a dying-bed, in behalf of such men, that the nurse and doctor have no suspicion of. The soul makes but one step out of darkness into light, and makes that step without a witness." And then this gentle psalmist confesses the reason of his willingness to believe in a death-bed repentance. He adds: "My brother's case has made me very charitable in my opinion about the future state of such men." But no voice has ever come to us from the other side announcing the state of that vast multitude who have delayed to grapple with eternity until the final breath and gasp of time. We hope for all, and may be comforted concerning them, as we read the story of that conversion on Calvary; yet, with so slender a support to cling to, who should dare, in his own case, to presume? Totally false impressions were conveyed to my mind, days before any one suspected delirium; and wishes were expressed, and even gratified, which afterwards were viewed with regret. What if those

directions, so kindly carried out by friends, had pertained to some weighty and sacred matter? and how heart-crushing the reflection, on that shore from which none ever pass to this world, that the mistake must remain uncorrected, working out perhaps bitter and direful results, while the ages roll! I am persuaded now that many last testaments — of the rich bequeathing their possessions, of parents choosing guardians for their children, of emperors disposing of their thrones — have been executed when the mind was bewildered and deceived. Insanity, not suspected by friends, is the cause that such testaments are sometimes found so strangely ill-advised, not honoring the testator, nor conferring benefit, but the rather evil, upon the inheritors. If, then, we hold any trust which may become a power of mortmain controlling other lives for their weal or their woe, ought we not to avail ourselves of the calm moments of health, while false impressions are least likely to mislead the judgment, and when all the moral perceptions are accurate and clear, that our posthumous influence, our “life beyond life” in this world, may not curse but bless posterity?

But before all these matters there is one vast and overshadowing concern. “Set thy house in order;” but have you yet planned and builded a hope for eternity? Possibly this inquiry finds you full of uncertainty and irresolution: not decided whether the Scriptures are all true, or partially false; inclining now to this and now to that system of religious faith; sometimes on the point of believing, and then again stoutly denying that you are in bondage to sin; to-day almost persuaded to be a Christian, and to-morrow doubtful of the authority of Christ; listening, for one Sabbath hour and with fear, to a voice sounding out

of the dread future, but turning back still to be led captive by a passing world; idling away your hours along the banks of this stream of time, and building no ark for your imperilled soul, in which it may securely abide when forced upon shoreless and untraversed waters! Let us never forget, my friends, while owning the vanity of human life, that it is also of vast importance. It is vain certainly, as the inspired Preacher contends, if we consider only its duration, and its meagre interests and rewards. But granting that it is only a point, still it is the point on which an eternity revolves. The moments are few and fleeting, but in them we scatter seed which is to bear us a harvest either of corruption or of life everlasting. Let us not stand wavering and questioning while the golden sands of our probation are so swiftly departing. Let us seize the opportunity, still graciously lengthened out to us, of securing that mighty future for which the present is given. Recounting the manifold goodness of our God, and the comforts wherewith He has comforted us in every tribulation, let us not any longer presume on a favor nowhere promised; but, yielding our souls to that other Comforter sent in the Father's name unto the heirs of salvation, let us be so renewed, and built up in faith and true holiness, that, whenever the last sand shall drop, we can each one say, with our divine Teacher and Lord, "I have glorified Thee on the earth, I have finished the work which Thou gavest me to do." A life of which this high testimony shall constitute the befitting close cannot be incomplete, however feeble or short; and all its sharp discipline, though not joyous but grievous now, shall reappear, transfigured by the indwelling Christ, in those bright robes awaiting it in heaven.

THE ABUNDANT ENTRANCE.

For so an entrance shall be administered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. — 2 PETER i. 11.

I HAVE never been able to explain to myself satisfactorily the uplifting influence which these words have upon me whenever I read them. And this feeling of joy and wonder I no doubt share with all imperfect Christians, — longing and struggling to be holy, yet compassed about with infirmities, and, despite their efforts, borne down and backward by the onsets of temptation. This text is to be classed with others, spoken from time to time by holy men as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, which utter to us the deep things of God. We feel their meaning, but are unable to articulate it in words of our own. Something in them, which takes hold of us with wondrous power, escapes our poor human speech. Nothing but the Spirit, which makes intercession for us with groanings that cannot be uttered, is able to breathe their meaning through the depths of our souls, in a kind of inarticulate joy and consolation. The curtain is lifted up, but the glory disclosed baffles our comprehension. We are caught in the embrace of celestial melodies; yet it is not the full anthem, but only broken strains, that are wafted down to us.

The apostle Peter is here looking forward to that scene in which a redeemed saint passes from the

church militant to the church triumphant. It is the hour of death to the Christian victor. He sees that disciple departing out of the world, yet to him it is not a departure, but "an entrance." Going from time into eternity is not the ending of life so much as its beginning. "Their works do follow them." A nobler service awaits them than they have hitherto performed. Not only this, but the faithful believer, coming up out of the warfare of the present life, has an entrance administered to him "abundantly." What is there stored up under this idea of abundance which makes it so comforting to our despondent hearts? "An abundant entrance." Can we fathom that expression? Why does it come to us when we are almost ready to yield in the struggle, and cause us to mount up afresh as on wings of eagles? "Be lifted up ye everlasting doors, and the King of Glory shall come in," is the welcome which awaits the Captain of our salvation. Is there to be such a lifting up of doors, and opening of the gates till they stand wide apart, for each poor soul sprinkled with the blood of that Captain? If so, how wonderful! It is an unspeakable thing; a miracle of divine love not possible for us to utter. And this entrance, even for you and me, my brother, is into a kingdom; the kingdom of our Lord and Saviour, who bought us for it with His own blood; a kingdom which does not pass away, like those set up by men in this world, but which is everlasting; an abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

We stand with the inspired apostle, and gaze upon the scene as he paints it, while that entrance is "ministered," overflowing with a solemn joy at the thought of how much more it suggests than it expresses.

“What must it be to be there?” is the question which our unsatisfied hearts are all the time asking; for though we sing of the realms of the blest, the noontide of glory, the anthems of rapture, the rivers of pleasure, all this imagery does not tell the full story; neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him. Beyond all that we see, there is something unseen; and toward that unexplored realm the soul is ever leaping forward, dwelling in it by faith, and finding there a blessedness, not yet comprehended, which belittles the best joys of the present time. When we sit by the side of the sea, and look out on its bright surface mirroring many a white sail, our thoughts do not stop even at its outmost rim, but leap beyond all it discloses to us, and go wandering over and through its invisible wastes. The fascination arises, not from the seen, but from the unseen: what is revealed to us would grow commonplace in a little while, but for those vast regions and depths over which is drawn the veil of waters. The great, still forest-trees, weaving their leafy arches over us, draw us on into their avenues, not by what they hang out visibly before us, but by that nameless spell which comes to us from their far, inmost depths: the recesses of silence, of mystery, of shadows yet unprofaned by human footstep, are the sanctuary we seek. When we look on the setting sun, we cannot think of it merely as a sign that the day is past. This thought could never awaken those feelings of solemn wonder with which we always behold the outgoings of the evening. Our minds go forward to what is beyond. That withdrawing from our sight marks an “entrance” into the unseen; it suggests to us the wonders of a

realm not yet revealed. Those golden glories seem to us to skirt the doorway into heaven, and we stand on the edge of the sea of glass that is before the throne.

Now the power which these scenes in nature exert upon us may help us in explaining, or rather in seeing why we cannot explain, the power of such words of Scripture as are uttered in the text. The soul leaps beyond all that is said, to the unspeakable; the scene put before us suggests that of which we can only say that it is a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. To him who walks by sight, all things have their ending here. But to him who walks by faith, all these "endings," so called, are only beginnings. What is an exit to the man of the world, is to him an entrance. The hour of his departure is the hour of his sublimest hopes; for it is only death itself which dies, and his foot is on the threshold of a temple into which he is going to join in the everlasting song.

" It is not death to die, —
To leave this weary road,
And, 'mid the brotherhood on high,
To be at home with God."

How perverse our way of looking at the matter! It is not loss to die, but gain. It is not the end, but the beginning of all that is fair and blessed; not a departure, but an entrance, — an entrance into our everlasting kingdom. Thanks be to God, who by His word of inspiration teaches us this truth, to which our natural heart cannot attain. Thanks to Him again, and in sweeter and loftier words if He has given us His spirit, so that we can take hold of the truth and be lifted up by it into that vision of the glory to come which takes from death its sting. Is it not the great attainment of life to be able, when its

last hour comes, to hear the chorus of heavenly welcomes before us drowning the plaintive farewells which follow after us? — to be able to turn upon our natural fears, and silence their disturbing voice with the glad words, —

“ I’m returning, not departing ;
 My steps are homeward bound.
 I quit the land of strangers
 For a home on native ground.

“ I am rising, and not setting ;
 This is not night, but day.
 Not in darkness, but in sunshine,
 Like a star, I fade away.

“ All is well with me forever ;
 I do not fear to go.
 My tide is but beginning
 Its bright eternal flow.”

The meaning of that great welcome into heaven, which the faithful Christian receives in the hour of death, does not come out so fully as it should in our English Bible. The figure which St. Peter uses is of military origin. He paints the dying believer as a soldier returning to his native city in triumph after a tedious warfare. The idea of a chorus, and of a long train of citizens coming out to meet him, and to escort him, with songs of victory and the jubilant strains of instruments of music, into the presence of Christ, is contained in the original word. The apostle sees the heroic Christian disciple honored with a welcome into heaven, which reminds him of the triumphs accorded to great military heroes in all countries and times. So early as the time of Abraham we find notice of this custom. When he was returning from the slaughter of the kings, Melchizedek came out to meet him and blessed him. After the victory

of Israel over the Philistines, in the battle at which the giant of Gath was slain, while the armies were returning home, "the women came out of all the cities of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet king Saul, with tabrets, with joy, and with instruments of music."

We remember the return of our armies at the close of the war for the Union, — how our people flocked to the capital of the nation, and what pains were taken by all, both small and great, to express to them the deep gratitude of the country saved under God by their valor. But nothing of this nature probably ever surpassed those triumphs with which Roman generals were honored, and accounts of which were familiar to the apostles, even if they had not witnessed them. The elaborate descriptions of some of those triumphs, by the native historians, — of Scipio returning from Carthage, of Cæsar coming home from the conquest of Gaul, of Titus and Vespasian bringing back the spoils of the East, — amaze us. We wonder at the vast pains taken to express to the victorious warrior, for a single day, the almost wild adulation of the whole Roman people. There was indeed much cause for the custom which grew up, of putting a slave beside the crowned victor in his golden chariot, whose office was to remind him of his frailty, and that he was but a man after all, lest his heart should be too much lifted up within him in the midst of these demonstrations.

Like these, and yet how wondrously unlike them, the entry of each humble follower of Christ into His everlasting kingdom! His entrance shall be ministered unto him abundantly, — with such demonstrations of gladness as never greeted a Roman general, — for he has conquered, not a province, but the world. There is no need to put a monitor beside him, to keep

him from being unduly elated ; for he has put down within himself all those lusts which war against the soul, and is kept holy, blameless, undefiled unto his Lord's coming, at whose feet he lays the crown of victory, exclaiming, as a part of the victory, "Thou alone art worthy."

This likening of the Christian to a soldier, though common to all the apostles, is more frequent in St. Paul's writings than elsewhere. He loved to call himself the soldier of Christ, a soldier of the cross ; and Christ Himself is the great Captain of his salvation. The young man Saul first appears distinctly before us as a military commander. — There was something in the duties of that office, — its exposures, discipline, perils, and encounters which pleased his heroic temper. The memory of it followed him all through his apostolic toils and sufferings for Christ. His description of that whole armor of God, which he bids the believer take to himself, found in the last chapter of Ephesians, is a marvel of brevity, accuracy, and completeness. And the image of a warfare, under which he views the Christian life, follows him all through to the closing hour. He is still a soldier when he stands on the verge of time, his foot pressing the heavenly threshold, his earthly tabernacle ready to be dissolved, and the house not made with hands lifting up its goodly proportions into the horizon of his faith. "I have fought a good fight," he says ; "I have finished my course, I have kept the faith : henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day." Peter says, in one place, that his brother Paul had written some things hard to be understood ; but this figure of a triumphing warrior

seems not to have puzzled him at all. For he, too, now that he was nearing the everlasting kingdom of his Saviour, loved to feel that the glorified saints would come out to meet him in long procession, and escort him, with an abundant entrance, into his Lord's presence. And the prayer of the dear old man, for all who love our Lord Jesus Christ, is that they may receive the like precious welcome. If it be true, as the Romish branch of the Christian church teaches, that St. Peter is the gate-keeper of the New Jerusalem, holding the keys which unlock its pearly gates, with what joy must he perform his office, as one battle-stained pilgrim after another comes up out of the tribulations of this life, and waits, under the archway of the everlasting doors, for the glittering cohorts which are to usher him in!

That is an entrance which the welcome home given to the earthly conqueror may well suggest, but by which it must in some things be forever surpassed. More like it was that entry into Jerusalem, on the first day of the week, when the Prince of Peace came not as princes of this world come, with banner and trumpet and garments rolled in blood, but meek and lowly, well pleased with the people, who cut down palm branches and spread their garments in the way, and blessing the little children shouting hosanna before Him as He went up into the Temple; not like that in the agony to which it led, — as the prelude to Gethsemane, Pilate's Hall, Golgotha, — but like it in the serene peacefulness of the victor, in the unmixed gladness of the welcome, the holy purity and sweetness of spirit which blooms out through the entire scene. Bunyan, giving his impression of the entrance of redeemed souls into heaven, says: "A company of the

heavenly host came out to meet them. . . . They compassed them round on every side: some went before, some behind, and some on the right hand and some on the left, continually sounding as they went, with melodious noise, in notes on high; so that the very sight was, to them that could behold it, as if heaven itself was come down to meet them. . . . There were also that met them with harps and crowns, and gave them to them; the harps to praise withal, and the crowns in token of honor. Then I heard in my dream, that all the bells in the city rang again for joy, and that it was said unto them, 'Enter ye into the joy of your Lord.' " But even Bunyan, bold as his conceptions are of the Christian's entrance into Paradise, does not attempt to reveal all the glory of their triumph, for he adds: "Just as the gates were opened to let in the men, I looked in after them, and behold the city shone like the sun; the streets also were paved with gold, and in them walked many men, with crowns on their heads, palms in their hands, and golden harps, to sing praises withal. There were also them that had wings, and they answered one another without intermission, saying, 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord.' And after that they shut up the gates; which, when I had seen, I wished myself among them."

But perhaps our misgiving hearts say that such welcomes can await only extraordinary Christians, — the Pauls, Luthers, Whitfields, Brainards, Judsons, whose hearts flamed with zeal for their Lord. Undoubtedly, as the stars differ one from another, so shall it be in the resurrection. But I think this difference will be in the persons themselves rather than in their welcome. God is rich in mercy toward us, even though we were dead in our sins, and raises us up into heavenly places,

that He may show the exceeding riches of His grace in Christ Jesus, saving us through our faith, which is His gift, and not for our works' sake, lest any man should boast. Though He puts before us no temptation to be unfaithful Christians, but stimulates us to entire consecration by assuring us that, if we sow sparingly, we shall reap also sparingly, yet they who came into the vineyard at the eleventh hour received every man his penny; and upon the things least honorable more abundant honor is bestowed, and God chooses not the mighty things, but the weak, foolish things of this world rather than the wise, that no flesh should glory in His presence. All is of grace. Every soul going up to be met by that celestial escort is a trophy of the victorious conflict of the Son of God with sin and death. For His sake alone, the ascending pilgrim is worthy; and hence he is more worthy, a brighter witness to the power of redemption, as he is feebler, and weighed down with a heavier load of infirmities. The glad father, we read, rejoiced most, not over his elder son ever with him, but over the prodigal. That the lost should be found, that the dead should be alive again, was special cause for thanksgiving; and so shall it be, among the angels of God, over one weak, faltering sinner who has the courage to repent and set his face homeward, with a feeling of sorrow and unworthiness bowing him down while he toils forward. The greatest, the most conspicuous, those who make us wonder at their zeal and devotion, are not without us made perfect. We also which believe do enter into rest. God hath made us all partakers of the same joy. True, we are exhorted to lay up treasure in heaven; to make to ourselves friends with the mammon of unrighteousness, who shall receive us, when

our earthly tabernacles fail, into everlasting habitations. It will be blessed, unspeakably blessed, if we are able to discern, in that descending escort, the faces of any kindred to whom we have tenderly performed all the offices of natural affection in Christ's name, — the faces of any children or youth whom we taught out of the word of God, and drew within the shelter of His covenant; the faces of Christian friends to whom we kindly ministered, watching over them, not for their halting, but for their edification, till they were taken away before us, — blessed if we can see, in the welcoming throng, any souls from the region of the shadow of death, to whom we sent the messengers of Christ and His salvation; any who once hungered and we fed them, or were thirsty and we gave them drink, or sick and in prison and we visited them. But “not unto us, not unto us,” will be our joyous confession, as we go up into the kingdom. All these, whom we helped in the days of their suffering, will minister our entrance unto us abundantly; yet when we see the King in His beauty, the utmost that we have done will not prevent us from saying that we are unprofitable servants, and joining, with lowly voice, in the ascription which no creature is too holy to make: “Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever.”

There are victories to be achieved in the heart sublimer than any we win outwardly on the world's broad stage. He that ruleth his own spirit — bringeth it, that is, into sweet acquiescence with the holy and blessed will of God — is greater than he that taketh a city. Man looketh on the outward appearance, but God on the heart. The angels watch our spiritual

conflicts, as they did the temptation of Christ in the desert, and His agony in the garden. The victory is rejoiced in, and a record of it made in God's book of remembrance, whenever we conquer an evil desire ; our patience amid difficulties, our fortitude under heavy burdens, our cheerfulness through everything that would fret and annoy, our unmurmuring submission when God smites us with the rod of His chastisement, are noted down ; and there is nothing hidden of this lowly discipleship which shall not be revealed, nothing covered which shall not be made known, but every man shall have praise of God for all that he has secretly denied himself, or silently suffered, or done for his Lord's sake in unseen and wearisome paths.

Such, my struggling Christian brother, is the view which the Scriptures give of your passage out of mortality into immortality. And this is the picture which we should hang up in our minds, over against all those gloomy forebodings of our death which fallen nature suggests. The terrors of dissolution, the racking pain and agony, the darkness, and the silence from which we shrink back with awful dread, cannot be overcome by our natural strength, or in any direct conflict. It is faith, beholding the glory to which death conducts us, that transfigures the final scene. The thanatopsis which nature gives is appalling, but that which faith supplies casteth out all fear. It makes us long to depart. It makes us think, with a serene thankfulness, of the kindred and friends in Christ who have been taken from our side. We stand like Elisha by the river, praising God for His goodness to those from whom we have been parted asunder ; gazing, with a sublime joy, upon the chariot of fire, and the horses of fire, by which they are carried up out of our sight into

heaven; and glad beyond measure if we may take up their descending mantle, and go forward in the good fight of faith, a double portion of the spirit in which they triumphed resting upon us, till we, too, shall be permitted to lay down our burdens, and pass over into that radiant land where the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest. Here it is crosses; there it shall be crowns. Here it is struggles; there it shall be victory. Here all our joys, with our days and years, have an end; there they shall only have their beginning forevermore. Here our hopes die with each descending sun; there an everlasting morning shall dawn. Here we tread paths which are narrow and strait, and which but few have the courage to tread with us; there an entrance will be ministered unto us abundantly, through the ample gates, by a great company of the glorified which no man can number. Here we stand like unfinished ships on the shore, and must submit to all the cutting, hewing, bending, and riveting needful to make us ready; there the word shall be given, and we shall launch away, all sail set, trembling with immortal vigor in every part, upon that sea whose waves are peace, and where the dark shadows of our sins shall be no more seen or felt forever.

THE VICTORY OVER DEATH.

Thy years shall have no end. — PSALMS cii. 27.

THESE words are the exclamation of a trustful and adoring joy.

The psalmist has just been meditating upon his own years, which came to an end so rapidly, one after another, that their swift succession surprised and startled him: but while he is overwhelmed by the thought that his years will soon be numbered, he finds comfort and lofty repose of soul in knowing that the years of God, whom he has made his refuge, have no end. He says that his "days are consumed like smoke," that his "heart is smitten and withered like grass." He repeats the comment, "My days are like a shadow that declineth, and I am withered like grass;" and then he escapes from the consciousness of his own frailty in the sublime words, "Thou, O Lord, shalt endure forever, and thy remembrance unto all generations." Having rested for a moment on this radiant summit of faith, he again descends to his poor condition as mortal; where he is comforted again, also, in the assurance that God hears the groaning of the prisoner, and does not despise the prayer of the destitute. Evidently the weight of years is getting to be heavy upon him, and he is sitting still in his infirmity, listening for the approach of swift-footed Death; for he says that God has "weakened his strength by the way." But he does not suffer the sense of his feebleness, and

his knowledge that Death is at the door to overcome him. He rises above these, and all else that pertains to him as mortal, and glories in the God of his salvation, who of old laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of His hands. "They shall perish, but thou shalt endure; yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment: as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed; but thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end." The thought that God is unchangeable and eternal lifts him out of the consciousness of his own frailty; and he has hope of the future, and of the whole short-lived race of man, for the reason that God is ever the same, — saying, "The children of thy servants shall continue, and their seed shall be established before thee."

Now, dear friends, the course of the psalmist is a good example for us to follow to-day, I think, if any of us, as some of us naturally must be, are inclined to associate sad thoughts of our frailty, and loosening hold upon this life, with the outgoing of another year. How to contemplate the rapid flight of time without fear, disturbance of mind, or any regret; how to spend a serene and happy old age, growing more peaceful and joyous in soul as the shadows of the long night fall more thickly about us, — is a question which wise men have discussed ever since the world began. Christ, our great Pattern, has not taught us in His life how we are to live in our declining years. He did not live to be old. He was an infant, a child, a youth, but never an aged man: His life ended during the period of early manhood. One of the most admired treatises we have on old age was written by Cicero, the great orator and moralist of Rome. He, however, had only the light of nature to

guide him ; and while he describes most charmingly those simple rural pursuits which become the aged, he yet misses almost wholly those higher sources of joy and peace to which the Bible points us. This comfort in God, which is the only real comfort, and which is more than equal to all our needs, gives its whole value to everything that can be said on the subject ; and it is to that that I would now direct your thoughts : “Thy years shall have no end.”

There was a period in all our lives when we perhaps did not feel our need of the contentment of mind which these words are fitted to give. The years were not short, but long to us, often tedious and irksome even, when we were children and youth. Then we wished ourselves older than we were, as now we are tempted to wish ourselves younger than we are. How we longed for the time when we should be emancipated from the restraints of childhood ; when we should cease to be under tutors and governors ; when the cords of parental authority should cease to hold us back and guide us ; when we should be free to choose our friends, our occupation, our pleasures, and to enter into all the affairs and excitements of life ! It seemed to us then that the slow years would never come to an end ; that our wearisome school days would never be over ; that the apprenticeship would never give way to the profession, the business, the trade. How long it seemed to us that we waited for the Christmas holidays, the summer vacation, the party, the visit, the promised excursion to begin ! We counted the days, and the hours almost, glad to note their lessening number, as we looked forward with eager and impatient hearts.

But now, if we have reached the meridian of life,

if we have climbed to the summit and are beginning to look down the declivity on the other side; if we are not toiling up toward manhood or womanhood, but beginning to step down toward old age and death, — how changed our impressions of the lapse of time! It is not slow, but swift. The wheels do not seem to be off its chariot, nor does it drive heavily. It is more than swift-footed: it is winged. So far are our years from having no end, that their beginnings and endings are nearly all we can remember about them. Only a few prominent events or experiences appear to us, some bright and sunny, and others sombre and frowning, above the dense mist which has settled down upon our retrospect. Whether we are joyful or sad, in view of this accelerated speed with which our years fly away, we must admit the fact. And I think that, while we admit it, it is possible for us also to rejoice in it. It is our privilege to be able to say, —

“Fly swifter round ye wheels of time,
And bring the welcome day.”

To him who has remembered his Creator in the days of his youth, with that spirit of true piety which the words imply, the evil days do not come, nor the years draw nigh in which he finds no pleasure. We can watch with glad and peaceful hearts the advance of old age. We can say with joy, We spend our years as a tale that is told.” If our lives be as a vapor which appeareth for a little time and then vanisheth away; if they are like the swift ships, like the eagle that hasteth to his prey, — yet this fact need not sadden us, but only fill us with a peace which is more deep, and with a hope which grows brighter and brighter. The near prospect of death had nothing gloomy in it to St. Paul’s mind when he said: “I am in a strait be-

twixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ which is far better ;” when he said : “ I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith ; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day.” It was with a peace past understanding, and with a hope full of immortality, that aged Simeon in the Temple, when he had taken the infant Saviour in his arms, prayed that he might depart. The desire to escape from life, for the reason that it has been a scene of bitter disappointment and trial, is not commended in Scripture. Elijah, saying in his despondency, “ It is enough, Lord ; and now, I pray thee, take away my life,” was rebuked for his discontent. God gives us our life ; and we should cherish it, however it may be crowded with infirmities and sorrows, while He deals it out to us. Our view of the objects of this earthly discipline is very narrow if we suppose that the feeblest and most painful life cannot be a rich blessing. We therefore should never hate our lives, or be weary of them, though they have become to us only an unmixed trial. We should bravely accept them, and joyfully live them through to the end ; and we should meet death, not as an escape from the evils of our earthly lot, but as another opportunity whereby we may glorify God. That which prepares us for the approach of death is the same which fits us for our daily life, — the full and joyous consciousness, namely, that, whether living or dying, we are the Lord’s. Old age was not a sombre period in human life to Bunyan’s thought, but the brightest and sweetest stage of Christian experience ; for his delightful picture of the Land of Beulah is in full sight of the dark river, — the place

of rest and heavenly contemplation which comes to refresh the pilgrims after their hard journey. And as their last days were their best days, so may ours be, if we have their faith in us.

In saying that it is the consciousness of union with God in Christ Jesus which enables the aged to view the rapid flight of time with composure, I do not forget the many circumstances which tend to make us happy and peaceful in our swiftly declining years.

It is a great comfort to any one, when he has reached the time of life in which he finds all his years short and hasty, if he indeed have that present solace which should accompany old age, "As honor, love, obedience, troops of friends." It lightens the weight of years upon the infirm Christian to know that he is not wholly a burden to others; that he is able to bear his own burden. He sees behind him the softening vistas of a well-spent life. He has been a friend to others, has stood faithfully and honestly in his lot, has served his generation as God gave him opportunity. Never anxious to be rich, or worrying about the morrow, he has laid aside enough to keep him from any distressing sense of dependence on his fellow-men; enough to repay them amply for all the service he may need in his infirmity, and enough to make glad the hearts of the widow and the fatherless who may look to him in their affliction. Such is the picture which we are wont to paint in our minds of the old age we should most desire. But we cannot all attain to it. Many who deserve it most, so far as we can discern, are not permitted to enjoy it. And even those who do achieve it are not blessed by it as they had fondly hoped. Their life seems calm and sweet to those who only look on it or anticipate it. But

the beauty is external. It does not enter into those hidden depths which are the seat of true pleasure and pain. Our charming idyl turns out to be an illusion. Amid so much which we should expect to give peace of mind, happiness, relief from all anxious care, full and sweet content, we are surprised to find restlessness, and a perpetual going about, and feeling as it were in the dark, as though the soul had lost some dear support, or were seeking some blessedness which forever eludes it. That life is not anchored. It cannot say, with a rejoicing confidence: "I know that my Redeemer liveth." "This night thy soul shall be required of thee!" are words which startle it, and from which it shrinks with fear. The most all its pleasant surroundings can do for it is to mitigate the physical pain, to soothe the sense of weariness a little: it needs some nearer and surer support, in order that it may glory in its infirmities.

Another refuge to which men often betake themselves, hoping to escape the gloom which they feel amid their swiftly passing years, is constant occupation. Beware of idleness, especially towards the close of a busy life, is the caution of worldly prudence. Keep your mind so thoroughly occupied as to forget the morrow; let the present and passing hour fill your thoughts. Not a few persons who thought themselves wise, acting upon this maxim, have tried to plan their lives accordingly. They reserved for their declining years some congenial undertaking, which they hoped would so engross them as to make them indifferent to the approaches of age. They have had much to say about the duty of not growing old, and have repeated the assertion that they never felt younger or enjoyed life more, in a way which betrayed the lurking fear of

their hearts. But this is not the way of the Bible, dear friends. It is wholly proper and wise in us to provide that our brain and hands shall have pleasant occupation up to the very hour of death, if this be indeed possible. But in a great many instances it is not possible; and even where it is, why should it be used as a trick to make us insensible of our swiftly approaching end? No; we wish to face the King of Terrors and see him disarmed. It is cowardly to try to hide from ourselves the real case in which we are. We do not want the courage of the ostrich, which endures danger by hiding its head. Yet this is the courage, and the only courage, which a great many moralists, having no faith in our blessed Saviour, not only preach, but try to practice. The future is all dark, empty, and dreadful to them; and hence, when they begin to grow old, they busy themselves more than ever with their books, their pens, their scientific investigations, their travels, — openly confessing that they hope Death will overtake them before they are made aware of his approach. Such is the courage of unbelievers. They know of no victory over Death but this. Christ, on the other hand, would have us fully awake to the coming of the pale messenger; would give us that courage which dares to contemplate him as near, and which welcomes him when he comes. All mere human devices are dishonest; they do but drug our senses to the awful fact of mortality. We need that in us which shall enable us to look on Death with unblanched countenances. It is when the touch of his cold hand does not terrify us, though we carefully note the chill creeping all through our frame, that we get the true victory over him. Jesus did not evade the subject of His own death in talking with His friends.

Even amid the sublime glories of the transfiguration, He spoke calmly of "His decease which He should accomplish at Jerusalem." It is a beautiful witness to the faith in God, so much better than all human philosophy, which cheered the souls of the ancient patriarchs, prophets, and kings, that they, in view of their own death, gathered their children and friends about them, and discoursed so calmly and sweetly of their departure. We cannot read the accounts of the last days of Jacob, of Moses, of David, without feeling that those days were indeed their best days. A holy radiance, as the sun setting in glory after a season of tempests, invests them. It is worth a whole life of battle to be able to bid adieu to life with such calm and lofty joy.

Our sense of the rapid flight of time would not sadden us, but on the contrary be most grateful and cheering to our hearts, if we could realize that our true happiness is in the future rather than in the past. This is one secret of the eagerness of childhood and youth to grasp what is before them. In our young years we are looking forward to something in this life which we think will increase our importance and make us happier. But as we get near to the end of the present life we do not extend those same feelings on into the heavenly realm. The grave limits our natural desire, and we turn back from its mystery and silence to live over again our sunnier days. Thus the habit of our minds becomes wholly changed: instead of locating our joys in the future, as we once did, we find them all in the past. This is nature, and we overcome it only by that faith which is the gift of God. If our friends, when they are taken away by death, might go from us as Elijah went from Elisha, their

departure would, perhaps, build a golden bridge over the dark river, across which our hearts would follow with yearning desire and hope. But instead of the chariot of fire and the glorious translation, turning our thoughts away upward, we have the solemn hearse and funeral; and our poor hearts cling to the green turf and white tablets, where we fancy that what we so loved has been deposited by us. Thus do all the joys and hopes of our lives get garnered up, and laid away in the past; and the future is vacant, dark, and dismal to our view. No doubt it helped the faith of the apostles greatly to see their Master received up into heaven, as He was, from the top of Olivet. That ascension mightily widened the sphere of their hopes. They saw that it was not all of life to live. Their expectation at once sprang forward beyond this short life, and took in the whole unending future of the soul. The resurrection became the great truth on which they insisted in their preaching. Thenceforth their conversation was in heaven, whither Christ the forerunner had entered; and they longed to depart, and be with Him in the kingdom which He was preparing for them. If we could always have that apostolic faith and assurance, dear friends, the rapid flight of time would be a joy to us. We should thank God that we are getting where the pearly gates and the immortal towers are in full sight, and the river of death would be to us "an insignificant rill," which we should be eager to cross at the earliest possible hour. But our friends do not go in the sublime manner in which Christ went. Their departure from us, one after another, tends to draw our affections back into the past, rather than make them leap forward into the future. Even the hope of heaven is not always able to recon-

cile us to the loss of earth. Our faith wavers and is weak in the growing gloom. The hand by which we hold our earthly treasures is gradually relaxing its grasp, and we cannot, with our other hand, get any comforting hold upon the things laid up for us.

There is, indeed, but one sure and full deliverance. Is there any among you that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? Let him trust in the Lord, and stay himself on his God. From all our philosophizing, from all our devices by which we would blind our eyes to the fleetness of our years, even from those eternal joys to which it is the office of faith to bear our hearts forward, we are called back to Him whose dear children we are; of whose nature we partake; with whose life we are identified; in whom we move and have our being, — the mighty God, whose years shall have no end. Is Christ our Refuge to-day? Are we indeed one with Him, grafted into Him by a living faith, so that the life which is in Him is in us also? Then we may turn away our thoughts from all gloomy questions, from our own frailty, and brief and empty lives, and lose ourselves in the joyous contemplation of His eternity, His unchangeableness, His ever-living and life-giving love. “I am the resurrection and the life,” said He, as He stood by the grave of Lazarus. These words, which have carried hope and joy to millions of sorrowing hearts, could have no consolation for us but for the blessed fact that we are members of Christ’s body. This mystical oneness with Him, into which we enter when we believe on His name, is our warrant that His destiny shall be ours; that we all were crucified in His crucifixion, and died in His death; that we have been raised up together with Him into heavenly places, and shall die no more, since He liveth forever.

“Thy years shall have no end :” this is the bright and impenetrable shield with which we turn aside every dart which death aims at us. The Captain of our salvation has conquered the last enemy. He is so wonderful in His working, so glorious in power, so changeless in dominion, and we are so entirely committed into His hands in the everlasting covenant sealed with His blood, that, while we think upon Him and our relations to Him, there is nothing which hath power to hurt us. All things are ours, — death as well as life ; the past, the present, and that which is to come. Every fear is repelled, and every gloomy thought flies away, as it becomes Christ for us to live, and He is formed within us, — He, the Ancient of Days, and of everlasting years.

It is with reference to two great enemies, sin and death, that the Bible calls Christ our Conqueror. Very naturally, perhaps, we think of Him chiefly as the great Champion who conquers sin for us. Under His leadership we overcome the world, and are made able to live holy and godly lives. He, dwelling within us, gradually displaces our indwelling sin ; and, as His life unfolds in ours, we are changed from glory to glory till at length we are filled with the fullness of God. But side by side with this story of the conquest of sin which Christ gains for us, our hearts are regaled with bright views of the complete victory over death which we have in Him. The apostles dwell quite as much on this phase of Christ’s love for us as on the other. Indeed, they often speak of sin as itself a species of death ; and so all the infinite blessing, which comes to us through faith in Christ, is summed up in the one victory over the grave which we have through Him. You know how it is with soldiers,

when some great general, in whom they have perfect confidence, takes the command of them. They cease to think of the power and number of their enemies, or of their own weaknesses. They forget themselves, and what may be before them, in their enthusiasm for the leader who was never known to fail; who is as sure to conquer as he is to give battle. But this eager and joyous courage, so easy for us to understand, is only a faint image of that which may fill all our hearts when we have indeed accepted, as our almighty Leader, Him who is "the Death of death, and hell's Destruction." The thought of Him as our Chamnion who meets death for us, the consciousness of His abounding love poured free as the sunshine around us, crowds out every fear, every gloomy apprehension; and we cannot draw back, or falter in the way by which He leads us, knowing that we are all the time pressing on into a fuller knowledge and sweeter enjoyment of the treasures of wisdom and blessedness which are hid in Him.

Dear friends, where we have been wont to see death, let us henceforth see nothing but Christ. Let us see, not our own weaknesses, but Christ where we once saw them. Let us see Christ instead of our sins, Christ taking the place of every doubt and fear, Christ formed within us, Christ put upon us the hope of glory, Christ in the room of all that terrifies or disturbs us, — Christ the conqueror of every foe, the healer of every sorrow, the fulfillment of every hope, our joy and the crown of our rejoicing.

THE GOSPEL OF THE WINDOWS.¹

Blessed is the man whom thou choosest, and causest to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts: we shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house, even of thy holy temple. — Ps. lxxv. 4.

IF I needed any warrant for speaking to you of the windows in our church, as I now propose to do, it is ready for me in great plenty, throughout the Psalms of David, who is never weary of writing about God's house, praising its goodness, and picturing to us the beauty of each part and feature.

I know nothing of the special thought or purpose which the artist had in mind when he designed these windows. I shall not be at all disturbed if I fail to get his point of view, or whatever violence I do to his ideas; for I look on these symbols placed about me by human hands, just as I look on the symbols which God has placed around me in nature. They are to me a language; and they utter to me certain great truths respecting God, and respecting Christ and His salvation, which I believe the Holy Spirit makes me able to discern, and which I pray that He may communicate to your hearts while I am speaking.

1. First is the window behind the audience, in the gable toward the setting sun; which you need not see to understand, for its meaning lies partly in the fact that it is behind you. It represents the beginning of the kingdom of God on earth; His revelation of His

¹ An interpretation of the Old South Church windows.

love and saving mercy in the early dawn of human history, before and just after the deluge, in the times of the patriarchs, and while His people were led by Moses and Aaron. It was the age of animal worship in the lands to which God came; and He revealed Himself, to those whom He would save, through the symbols from the animal world which they used in religious worship. Hence the cherubim. These were composite figures: having the face of a man to signify intelligence and wisdom; the face of a lion to signify strength and majesty; the face of an ox to signify patience and obedience; the face of an eagle to signify far-sightedness and swiftness. Now these four faces are given in our window; and thus the window represents that whole early period in which God spoke to men chiefly through symbols. Cherubim were placed at the entrance to the Garden of Eden to keep the way of the tree of life. Cherubim were placed on the ark of the covenant, guarding the shekinah above the mercy-seat. Figures of cherubim were woven into the curtains of the tabernacle; and they reappear in the temple at Jerusalem. Ezekiel saw cherubim in his vision by the river Chebar. And John in Patmos, who uses the Old Testament imagery, speaks of them as guarding the white throne in heaven. They are spoken of in certain places as having wings full of eyes; and this fact the artist has given us in the window. We have, therefore, suggested to us in a single picture that whole early period through which God revealed Himself to men in the language of symbols. But these four faces, with their background of wings full of eyes, are placed between the four arms of a cross in the window. At the centre of the cross, where its four arms meet, can be seen the three initial

letters which teach us that Jesus Christ is the Saviour of men. Around this centre is a blazing sun, and at the extremity of each arm is another sun, teaching us that Christ is the light of the world. Yet this cross and these suns are but dimly disclosed; the cross is in the midst of the cherubim, whose glory overshadows it. And thus we are taught that the atonement of Christ, to be fully revealed at a future day, was the underlying fact of all that early symbolism. We see it but dimly, and the whole window has a somewhat confused look, thus reminding us that God's first revelations were imperfect shadows of good things to come. He came down to the low estate of men, and made known His saving mercy toward them, not all at once but gradually, as they were able to bear it.

2. We pass, next, from the period of partial symbols to that of distinct prophecy. This period is given us in the figures of the four great prophets, — Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel, — in the wall to the left of the organ choir. Their words cleared up to men much that was obscure in the earlier worship. The prophets denounced sin in all its forms, as visible symbols could not do; and they foretold the coming of One who should deliver the world from sin. This was especially true of Isaiah, whom we call “the evangelical prophet;” and he is therefore represented, in the window, clasping the symbol of the Lamb of God with his right arm, while his left hand is uplifted to entreat attention. The burden of that entreaty is written on a scroll which he holds up to view, “Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth,” — words which may be found in the first chapter of his prophecy, at the second verse. The words on the scroll which Jeremiah holds are the following: “And the Lord

said unto me, Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth ;” which occur at the ninth verse in the first chapter of his prophecy. He, too, stands with uplifted finger, and looks off, as though speaking to the whole world, warning men to give ear to the divine messages which he brings. Next we have Ezekiel, holding with both hands the scroll, on which are written, from the eleventh chapter, fifth verse of his prophecy, the words, “The spirit of the Lord fell upon me, and said unto me, Speak.” He grasps these words as though they were the comfort of his soul. For he was naturally timid like Moses, and found courage to go and speak unto Israel, only in the assurance that God was with him, and that he spoke God’s words, not his own. Last in this series of windows we have Daniel ; and on his scroll are written the words at the sixteenth verse in the tenth chapter of his prophecy : “Behold, one like the similitude of the sons of men touched my lips.” The incarnate Christ, that is, becomes the theme of his prophecies. He has visions which are in many respects the same as those of John in Patmos ; and he foretells with wonderful exactness the glories of the kingdom which is to be everlasting, and to which the dominion under the whole heaven shall be given. Now we are to bear in mind that these four figures stand for all prophecy, just as the four faces, with the cross under and among them, stand for all revelations of God through visible symbols. In earlier times God spoke to men chiefly through material forms, addressed to the eye. But gradually He chose articulate speech, addressed to the ear ; and this language, in the mouths of His prophets, enabled Him to utter more definitely the counsels of His love, and to point men forward, with ready and ex-

pectant hearts, to the great day of His salvation which should rise upon them in the coming of the Messiah.

3. Accordingly we have, to represent the dawn of this great day, our third series of windows, — that behind the pulpit, and shedding its soft beauty over all the house, — which pictures to us the birth of Christ. How in keeping it is with the character of the event which it celebrates! its colors marvelously restful to the eye, and holding us with a stronger spell the more we look upon them; even as there are no words so fitted to soothe and gladden our souls, blessing us more the more we study them, as those upon the scroll running across the window, and let down toward us by angel hands, which say, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men.” We are helped to the interpretation of this large window by the central window in the cluster above it, representing to us the infant Saviour in the manger. Around this centre are gathered, in the other small windows, angels with various musical instruments, — such as the harp, the cymbal, the cornet, and the organ, — praising their incarnate King. And at the two lower corners, on the right hand and the left, are the two Greek letters, Alpha and Omega; and around them faces in ruby, proclaiming that Christ is the First and the Last.

Looking now at the great window, we see the angels crowding the high arches of heaven, blowing their trumpets, covered with light, pressing downward upon the night air, their faces full of a sweet and loving calm, as though they were full of sympathy for a lost world, and glad, for our sake, to bring to us the good tidings of great joy. Beneath them is the dark-blue sky of an Oriental night. The stars are shining. A

crescent moon, on the right, interprets to us those words of John, "He must increase." The prophetic star, which the wise men followed, is seen above the tower of Bethlehem. And the white dove, flying in the midst toward the left, may be taken as a symbol of the Holy Spirit poured out on the shepherds, enabling them to see the heavenly vision. These, with their flocks, fill the lower part of the window. Some of them have fallen on their knees, and the flowers and grass and shrubs are bright about them. They are clad in the plain garments of their calling, with their shepherd's crooks and wallets and pipes and water-bottles. And their faces and various attitudes are a most instructive study. The least excited of them all is a boy, a truly representative figure, unawed by the scene, holding his lantern behind him, and looking on with a child's wonder and enjoyment. The flocks, awakened by the light, seem to think that morning has dawned, and are conducting themselves as sheep and lambs should under that impression. The shepherds on the left of the picture seem to represent that class of men who gladly welcomed Christ, and believed on Him as the Saviour of their souls; for there is a look of faith, of hopes fulfilled, of reverence, of humility and consecration, on their faces. But on the right, under their rude shed, we see harder faces, and eyes with a cold twinkle in them. They have a doubting look in their astonishment; do not seem to be sweetly entranced like the others. And I cannot help fancying that they represent to us those Jews who rejected Christ when He came, as the others do all those who with meekness and joy receive Him. Thus has this window spoken to me; yet it may have spoken differently to you, — something else, or more,

or not so much; for of course its language to us, in these minutæ, will depend on the thoughts and feelings with which we study it.

4. Continuing on now, in the order of the Bible which we have thus far followed, we come next to the four small windows to the right of the organ, which represent the four evangelists, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. It is by no means to be regretted that they happen to be small; for they come after Christ, whose greatness belittles all things else. The four prophets, who expound to us the symbols of the western window, may be made large; for their words are nobler and better than the symbols they explain. But the evangelists, who record the events of the divine mission foreshadowed in this eastern window, do not add anything to it. They are represented each with a pen, and with a book in which he writes, thus signifying that it was their office simply to describe the doings and take down the sayings of Christ. One of the evangelists, John, was also one of the most prominent of the apostles; and we have, besides his Gospel and visions in Patmos, his three affectionate letters to the churches. As the four prophets represent the whole Old Testament Scriptures, so the four evangelists represent all the writers of the New Testament. And thus the entire circle of holy Scripture is complete, without bringing in the two transept-windows. These, to which we next come, have their distinct office; which is to represent to us more particularly the history of Christ and of His church in the world.

5. Turning, therefore, to the north transept, we see Christ, the wonder-worker, during the period of His incarnation. The cluster of small windows at the top gives us, in the centre, the symbol of the atoning

Lamb. Thus we have the key to the whole, — God manifest in the flesh to destroy sin. The small windows grouped around this have in them angels bearing scrolls; and on the scrolls are written the names of the cardinal Christian graces, — love, faith, joy, goodness, peace, gentleness, long-suffering. They are seven in number, thus signifying completeness of Christian character. The face of each angel seems to express the gracious quality whose name he holds up. These seven graces were all conspicuous in our atoning Saviour, and our eye instinctively turns from them to Him. Beginning on the left, we see Him in the act of stilling the tempest. What majesty there is in His attitude, in His countenance, and in His uplifted hand, as He speaks the sublime words, “Peace, be still!” He is the Lord of nature, whom winds and seas obey; and a divine calm fills Him amid the storm which has made His disciples frantic with terror. Passing on from this scene, we next see Him in the house of Jairus, the ruler of the synagogue. There are the afflicted father and mother, and the disciples whom he admitted to the chamber of death. He has uttered the words, “Maid, I say unto thee, arise;” and is in the act of lifting her from her couch by the hand. Again we see Him, in the next scene, turning the water into wine. And after that we behold Him at the grave of Lazarus, the stone rolled away, and he that had been dead four days coming forth. And this brings us to the last and greatest miracle of all, His own resurrection from the tomb. We see the women kneeling at the empty sepulchre, and the two angels above them, saying unto them, “He is not here, He is risen.” The lesson of this window is, that Christ, the atoning Lamb, has received all power in

heaven and on earth. He has the keys of death and hell; and all the laws and forces of nature are subject to Him. He can lay down His life, and He can take it again. Having humbled Himself and become obedient unto the death of the cross, he is highly exalted; there is nothing which does not bow to Him and confess that He is Lord. He is proved to be an all-sufficient Saviour. We can trust Him with an implicit faith. Our souls are forever safe in His keeping. He can remove our sins from us; He can deliver us from the evils of the present life; He can raise us from the dead, and present us faultless before His Father. We have no sorrows, no disappointments, no griefs or bereavements, in which we may not go to Him, assured that He is able to comfort us, and knowing that He will comfort us; for how shall not He, who is the cross-bearing Lamb of God, be ready to exert all His power in behalf of those for whom He laid down His life?

6. And thus we come to the window in the south transept. In this window, representing the parables, Christ does not appear. You know He said to His disciples, it was expedient for them that He should go away, in order that the Holy Ghost might come upon them. Therefore the atoning Lamb vanishes out of sight when His wonderful works in the flesh are complete, and the quickening and sanctifying Spirit takes His place in the church. We see that Spirit, in the form of a dove, in the centre of the cluster at the top of the south window. He is descending on open wings, as He descended at the time of Pentecost. Around this centre, in the other small windows, we see written the names of the seven cardinal natural virtues, with their appropriate symbols.

They are wisdom, strength, fear, piety, understanding, cunning, counsel. All these are traits of the natural man at his best estate. And it is the Holy Spirit entering into the midst of these, exalting them, purifying them, and harmonizing them, which makes the new man in Christ Jesus. Thus we have the germ of the Christian church; and that church, as it exists in all ages, under the guidance of the Divine Spirit, is represented to us by the parables in the large window below. First we see the strong man, full of youth and hope, going forth to sow. The sun is just rising upon him. The birds are busy by the wayside, the thorns and the stony places appear, and in the distance we see a field of ripened grain. Thus does the Christian church, being full of the Holy Ghost, sow broadcast the word of God,—from its pulpit, in its Sunday-school and homes, and wherever through its members it may come into contact with men. By such means it is that the lost are found and saved. And hence we have, next, the returning prodigal. See him. He has come from the far country. His face is toward his father's house. Penitence and sorrow bow him down. He is weary of his sins, which filled him with husks and clothed him in rags. The father has come out to meet him, is falling on his neck, and they are mingling their kisses and tears. O happy church and happy pastor whose labors are thus blessed! who do not toil in vain for the souls about them, but are permitted to see them coming, confessing that they have sinned, resolved to wander no longer, pleading that they may be admitted to the humblest place in God's family. The church is full of sympathy for all the unfortunate and wretched. And hence we have for our next scene the good

Samaritan. It is our office, dear brethren, to care for those for whom no one else cares. Only a faithless church, out of which the Holy Spirit has departed, passes by on the other side of woe and suffering and want. All the unsaved, as we are to view them, have fallen among thieves. The darts of the Evil One have wounded them, and their own transgressions have brought them down into death. We are to lift them up, give them the wine of God's promises to drink, pour the oil of Christ's love into their wounds, and tenderly care for them, till they shall have the witness in their souls that they are healed. And now we begin to draw toward death and the judgment-day. The story of the ten virgins lifts up before us its dread lesson. There is to be a separation. See them! five admitted to the feast, with joy in their faces; five excluded. What grief and agony and despair in these, who have arrived only to find that the door is shut! Is there to be such a separation in this congregation? in these homes, these circles of acquaintances and friends? Who are the foolish and who are the wise? The Holy Spirit, coming in the truth and the church, has spoken to us all. To what ones of our number is that word already a savor of life unto life, and to whom shall it prove a savor of death unto death? But the last word of Christ to us, dear friends, is a word of comfort, of encouragement, of hope. Hence the parable of the laborers in the vineyard. They are returning in the evening, and the husbandman is giving to every one of them his penny. Yes, there is the eleventh-hour man; and he is receiving as much as they who have borne the heat and burden of the day. Christ, that is, freely and gladly saves all who enter His service. Have you wasted many years of

your life in worldliness and sin? Do you feel that you have only a little longer to stay on the earth, and that the remnant of your days is not worth consecrating to Christ? Nay, dear friends, take hope from this parable. Go ye in; and Christ shall save you, as He saves all others. It is never too late till the door is shut; never too late till the night has come; never too late till the husbandman calls the laborers to reckon with them. But of that hour knoweth no man; no, not even the angels of God. Therefore stand not all the day idle, but come at once into Christ's service while you may. "Now is the accepted time," says this last word in the story of redeeming love; and all these windows, as you look round upon them and study the meaning of their divine messages, bring you up to this final point, and say unto you, "Behold, to-day is the day of salvation."

THE NATURAL AND THE SPIRITUAL BODY.¹

For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. — 2 COR. v. 1.

“THE Lord is risen!” is the glad shout which to-day flies around the world on the wings of the morning. The Jewish calendar assures us that we do not mistake the time of our Lord’s resurrection. This is indeed the true anniversary of that first day of the week in whose early twilight Mary saw the sepulchre empty and the two angels sitting, one at the head and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain. He was not there, but had risen from the dead in a body which was no more subject to death.

At this point, dear friends, the resurrection of Christ connects itself with our own resurrection in a most wonderful and gladdening way. His coming up out of the sepulchre is the proof that we shall not forever sleep in our graves. For He is the first-fruits of them that slept, and His resurrection body tells us what ours shall be. It was no truer of Him than it is to be of us, that we, as St. Paul puts the case in our text, shall lay aside this earthly tabernacle in which we now are, and be clothed upon with the house which is from heaven. How often we try to conjecture what the nature of the spiritual body is, and what kind of a life that is which we are to live in it! The

¹ Preached Easter, April, 1879.

Bible gives us a great many hints on these points, suggestive of a blessedness more glorious than can be explained to us beforehand; and of all those hints, perhaps none contains richer food for thought than the scripture before us.

Let me call your attention a little to this figure, in which St. Paul likens our mortal body to a tabernacle and our spiritual body to a house, that we may enter into the glad spirit of the day, and join our voices with the ten thousand voices of field and forest and sky and flood which in this spring-time are coming out of their wintry silence and praising God.

1. Most reassuring to us is it to notice, first, the clear distinction which the text makes between us and the body in which we are or are to be. It does not confound us either with the earthly tabernacle or the house from heaven. Our present identity does not cease when the tabernacle dissolves; we do not take a new personality and have a new consciousness when we enter into the house. Our real self, that in us which says *I*, does not perish but lives on, forever knowing itself to be the same person which it has ever been, whether clothed with its natural or its spiritual body. You see in his use of the pronoun "we" how sharply St. Paul distinguishes between every man and the body in which he dwells. The body may change, but the man is the same. One body may die and be laid aside, and another body take its place, but the indwelling man lives on unconscious of decay. We are distinct from our bodies, dear friends, as the letter from its envelope, as the seed from its husk, as the light from the lantern through which it shines. It does not make you another person to move out of a tent into a house, and this is what happens when you exchange

the fleshly for the spiritual body. You are still you. You have the same consciousness after you have moved which you before had. You say: "I find myself differently situated, furnished with better organs through which to act, no longer in a tent but in a house, but I am still I." Being the same person that you always were, your memory and all your other faculties do their office. You may increase in knowledge and wisdom, and in your love of serving God, but it will all the time be you, not something else, which makes this blessed increase. In your body that shall be, you will not forget, any more than in your body which now is, nor as much. The spiritual organs through which you then will act may enable you to recall many things which your poor earthly frame has left you to forget. The shepherd boy does not forget his past life when he has become a king, nor the traveler his native land and its interests when he has passed to the other side of the globe. And so you, being still the same person, will associate with yourself all your life on earth when you have passed out of the earthly into the heavenly. You will then know, better than you now know, all about your friendships, your relations, your achievements, your sorrows and struggles in life. You will need there, as never here, a sight of the blood which cleanses from sin, that assurance of forgiveness which more than takes all the sting out of guilt, a firm confidence that only good can come to those who love God. Your essential needs as a rational and immortal soul will be the same in eternity as in time, your dangers and exposures to sin will be the same; in Christ alone can you be then safe, as in Him alone you are now. You will there have the same powers of mind as here, only acting through a better organ-

ism, as a house is better than a tent ; you will still be the same person, designated, as properly as you ever were, by the name given you in your infancy.

2. Another feature of the heavenly life which blooms out from this text is the continuance there of the same blessed service which should be the joy of all men here. The holy employment to which our Master has called us on earth will go on in heaven, only in a completer and nobler way. It is not certain that St. Paul had the ancient tabernacle and temple of the Jews in mind when he wrote, yet we may without violence give his words that reference. He has told us in other places that our bodies are temples of God ; and if the natural body, much more the spiritual ; and certainly the spiritual exceeds the natural in glory and beauty as much as the temple at Jerusalem did the tabernacle in the wilderness. But the temple-service did not differ essentially from the tabernacle service. Even the two structures were not unlike in their general form and arrangement. Solomon did not depart from the patterns of things given to Moses in the mount. In both there was the great court towards the sun-rising, in which were the laver and the altar of burnt-sacrifices ; in both was the holy place, with the candlestick, the show-bread, and the altar of incense ; in both was the holy of holies, containing the ark of the covenant, into which the high-priest entered once a year. The sons of Aaron and the Levites ministered in the tabernacle just as in the temple. At first the worship was comparatively simple, as befitted the condition of the people journeying from Egypt to Canaan ; yet it was not another worship, but the same, more elaborate and perfect, which was celebrated in the temple. The tabernacle decayed and

was laid aside, and the glory of the Lord filled His house on Mount Moriah; yet, in this as in that, were the morning and evening sacrifice, the solemn assemblies, the rites, the services of thanksgiving and blessing, which Moses appointed. So with us, dear friends, when we leave our tabernacle and enter into our house. The house is to be a great deal more glorious than the tabernacle. Read the description of Solomon's Temple, and contrast it with the account of the tabernacle set up in the wilderness, if you would know how the heavenly body is to excel the earthly. The earthly is often beautiful, always so when lighted up by a pure spirit dwelling within it, but it is not the house, it is only the tabernacle. It is God's handiwork, fearfully and wonderfully made; and though it is but a desert tent, compared to the house in the heavens, yet God has put us in it that we may do here the same service which will be our blessed employment there. We shall be the same beings, called to the same high service, in the heavenly temple as in the earthly tabernacle. It is clear, then, that the making of our future heaven must be largely our own work. If we do not learn to take delight in God's service, for which the earthly tabernacle is given, how can it be a joy to us when we have received the heavenly house? If we do not make for ourselves a heaven here, what right have we to expect one anywhere? The conditions of our blessedness can never change. Our present unhappiness is not due to the earthly body, and our future happiness will not be due to the heavenly body. It is upon the soul within the body that all depends. All our wretchedness is due to our dislike of God's ways, and not till we have learned to say, "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord,"

can we hope for blessedness in the house not made with hands. The tabernacle and temple are not the same, but they resemble each other. Any one standing on Mount Moriah, and looking at the temple with its goodly stones and rich curtains and golden vessels and ornaments, would have been reminded of the tabernacle. And so the spiritual body, though not the same as the natural body, may resemble it; may remind us of it, though unspeakably more radiant and noble, in such a way that we shall know in heaven those whom we have known on earth, friend recognizing friend, and kindred their kindred, while all alike are still carrying forward that blessed work of God which they learned to love here below.

3. The metaphor which St. Paul uses in our text, again, suggests that God is to be more central to our thoughts, and our worship of Him more fixed and abiding, in heaven than on earth. The temple had a centralizing power; it unified the people of Israel as the tabernacle could not. That tabernacle was pitched now here and now there, as the exigencies of the nation required. They did not dwell so much as sojourn, while they lived in tents and worshiped in "the tent of meeting." Even in the land given to their fathers, they were not for a long time sure enough of their ground to build them houses to dwell in. The whole nation of Israel were unsettled, migratory, staying now here and now there, while the tabernacle lasted and so long as they dwelt only in tents. And what was true of that nation is true of all nations. And what is true of whole races is true of families, of individuals. To live in tents is to live a moving, roving, shifting life. Nomadic tribes live in tents. The tents of Kedar, and the curtains of the

land of Midian, tell us what were the habits of the people in those countries. Israel, during the forty years of desert life, moving from one camping-place to another, dwelt in tents. The house is the sign of rest, of a fixed abode. When David had rest from all his enemies round about him, he built him a house to dwell in. And this reminded him that the worship of God should no longer be in a tabernacle. Why should he live in a house and the ark of God be still within curtains? He lived in tents before he came to the throne, he and his devoted adherents, while Saul was chasing them among the mountains; but they exchanged their tents for houses as soon as the land had rest and they were settled down to peaceful pursuits. The tent is the soldier's shelter while he is on his campaigns. It is the sign of struggle, of uncertainty, of sudden flights and marches, and movings to and fro. It speaks of a mode of life which is temporary, abnormal, unsatisfying. Now, how like our present life in the flesh all this is! In this earthly tabernacle we groan. We are burdened with unsatisfied desires. We struggle and fight, and are driven about by fierce temptations. We have no rest. It is a life of toil and conflict. When one battle ends, another begins; the warfare may change its form and appearance, but it does not end. There are foes within as fierce as any without. The perfect rest, the peace with no cloud out of the past or rising in the future, does not come. This is what we must endure in one way or another while we are in the tabernacle. But the house in the heavens, the spiritual body, tells us another lesson. When we pass into that our rest comes. We are of the church triumphant, no more of the church militant. The two hosts are but one, and all

their service is essentially one service of God, yet how different that life from this! how vastly more full, satisfying, unchanging! as much greater and more blessed than this as your houses are better than the soldier's tent, as the costly Temple of Solomon was better than the tabernacle in the wilderness! There you will not be tossed up and down, will not be led astray by temptation, will not be driven to and fro by the hosts of evil. You will have found your fixed abode, you will rove no more, you will abide in God, and His words will abide in you. All your life through those eternal ages will be like the flow of a river which has come out of its mad conflict with rocks and cliffs and headlands, and which moves on majestic, peaceful, and free through the bright plains. That life in the spiritual body flows, forever flows; yet it is ever finding its rest in Christ, as the river is at rest in the sea. So blessed, so great, so satisfying and unchanging is the life on which St. Paul looked when he said, "We know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

4. These words of the apostle remind us, fourthly, that the idea of home which we all have and vainly seek to realize on earth will be fully and blessedly realized in heaven. Our life in the spiritual body will bring us to the realization of all our ideals. We have ideals of a perfect state of society, of a perfect church and family, of peace, of purity, of beauty, of order, of goodness, which in this life are all the time hovering before us. We reach out after them, and yearn to see them becoming real in us and in the world, but we cannot grasp them; they are within the realm of the unattained. So the word "home" suggests to us

something which our best earthly homes have not yet fully realized. The perfect home after which our hearts reach out and yearn is yet to come. We are strangers, sojourners, pilgrims; we are traveling towards our native country. There is a constant homesickness within us, and that for which we most deeply sigh is not behind us, but always before us. Though we may regret the joys of other days, or are saddened to find ourselves growing old, yet that which is deepest in us is all the time reaching forward; the home which shall satisfy us is yet to come; will not be reached till we have entered the spiritual body. How befitting to all this is the imagery of our text! It is our tent-life which we are now living. We journey on towards the "Home, sweet home," for which our hearts hunger. When we lie down at night, it is our sweetest thought of the day just gone that we have "pitched our tents a day's march nearer home." We do not reach it, but only go towards it, moving the tabernacle with us. Though we build us great houses, and fill them with pleasant things, or though we live in ancestral mansions in the midst of ancient parks and gardens, they do but foreshadow to us our real homes; they belong to our tabernacle life, and point on to the house not made with hands. How true this is may be seen in the multitude of hymns and poems of which it is the theme. That we are absent from our true homes in these fleshly bodies, and find them only as we pass into the body which is spiritual, is a truth so native to our minds, and so mingled with all our pleasant and poetic dreams, that one can hardly speak of it without seeming to sink into mere sentiment and cant. But men cannot let this subject alone. Though they are silent about it, their thoughts will at

times be busied with it. They may make many wild and even puerile conjectures about the employments of heaven, what the resurrection really is, when it takes place, what is the nature of the spiritual body, where heaven is, or whether it is anywhere in particular; but they will go on doing this, however reason may seem to convict them of its folly, driven to it by that inward yearning for the ideal home which is an essential part of every man's nature. No truer or safer words concerning that home were ever spoken than those of our text. It is a house. Here we have but tents, tabernacles. This is not the soul's home. We need here something which we can take along with us on the road, which can be easily set up or folded together, which we can each day pitch farther forwards; but we shall lay it aside when the bright doors of our eternal homes have been shut behind us, when we have passed into the house with which we are to be clothed upon from heaven.

5. The frailty of the bodies we now have, and the enduring vigor and strength of those in which we shall be, is also vividly suggested to us by the imagery of the text. No tent or tabernacle which is in constant use can last a great while, but there are houses and temples still standing which were built in the days of the patriarchs. But not even houses of stone, such as men build, can adequately prefigure the lasting beauty and freshness of the spiritual body. We fall short in describing that house, as in describing the heavenly city, though we call to our aid the most costly and imperishable things of this world, all manner of precious stones, the jasper, sapphire, chalcedony, and emerald, the sardonyx, sardius, chrysolite, and beryl, the topaz, the chrysoprasus, the ja-

cinth, and the amethyst, the transparent glass, the silver, the gold, and the pearl. Our imagination lays hold of these, yet they all but dimly foreshadow what the house from heaven is. St. Paul heightens our conception of it by the contrast which he uses. Not only is that the house and this the tabernacle, but this is earthly, while that is heavenly and is the building of God. The body in which we now are was taken out of the ground, and shall return to it, but that in which we shall be is of nobler substance. God makes it, and clothes the spirit which is freed from earth with it, so that it is called His building. And not only that, but it is eternal: no earthly mixture in it, but purely of celestial substance, the building of God, the house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. We are now bearing the image of the earthly, but we must also bear the image of the heavenly. After that which is natural will come that which is spiritual. We have been sown in corruption, but must be raised in incorruption; in weakness, but must be raised in power; we have been sown in dishonor, but must be raised in glory. It is not we but our dwelling that changes. The earthly tabernacle which is flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God. It must be laid aside, changed for the house which is eternal, if not by the slower processes of nature, then in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, when the trumpet shall sound.

Just where it is, or how it is, that this glorious transformation takes place, I do not undertake to say. I only know that the spiritual body which is eternal is God's building. Whether it is in us now, to be set free at death, or is kept on high for us, to be given us when we quit this pilgrim's tent, I know not, though

the words of Scripture seem to me rather to favor this latter impression. It is not easy for me to think of the spiritual body as now within the natural, but as prepared and waiting for us in the heavens.¹ Do not our Lord's words favor this impression where He says, "Make to yourselves friends . . . who, when your earthly tabernacles fail, shall receive you into everlasting habitations." Nor can I feel that the frail earthly body, which we tenderly place within the "low green tent" when it falls away from the soul, wholly perishes. I cannot say, with one of our best poets, that the curtain of that low tent "never outward turns." The sacred instinct within us, which leads us to guard and adorn our cemeteries, seems to me to speak of a resurrection morning when the graves shall be opened, and they that sleep shall come forth. We may all miss the exact truth as to the resurrection of the body. I only know that our faith has some kernel of beauty and glory in it; that not less wonderfully, but more wonderfully than we dream, all which the Bible says of our present bodies and their resurrection from the dead shall be fulfilled. Yet I have an equally strong faith that, as our ancient confessions say, "the souls of the righteous do at death immediately pass into glory." I cannot believe that they are lingering somewhere between the tabernacle and the house; I must think of them as already in the building of God which is eternal in the heavens. They are the same persons now which they were while they tabernacled with us, and their worship and service of God are essentially the same. They are now singing, only in louder and sweeter strains, the hymns

¹ Thou sowest not that body that shall be, but God giveth a body as it hath pleased Him.

of praise to the Lamb in which we join. Our strong helpers, our friends, the loved and venerated, our children full of budding promise, who have fallen on the way as we all must fall, who were called at midnight, and

“ whose tent at sunrise on the ground
A darkened ruin lay,”

have entered into the full enjoyment of the ideal home. The glad Easter morning which the bursting flowers welcome, the stir and murmur of the fields and streams, the many-throated song within the deepening veil of the woods, combine with the blessed word of God and our sacred heart-hunger to assure us that it is well with the good whom we miss from their places to-day, and that our own walk with Christ is taking us on out of the imperfect towards the perfect. To the tabernacle succeeds the house. At the end of the pilgrimage we pass into the eternal home. “ And there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain.”

CHRISTIAN MISSIONS, AND THE SOCIAL IDEAL.¹

And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. —
REV. xxi. 1.

NO man has ever yet doubted that some such blessedness as these words foretell is in store for our world. It is one of the sacred beliefs of the human heart, that the scattered races of mankind shall be one day brought together into a single family. This faith is intuitional; it is born with us, like the faith in our own immortality, or in the existence and omnipresence of a God of love. Before the light of the gospel had dawned on men, poets sang of the golden age to come, and philosophers tried to tell what it should be or be like. It is one of the chief themes of prophecy in the Old Testament as well as in the New. The whole Bible, but perhaps more especially the last book of it, is a divine Amen to our instinctive faith in the brotherhood of mankind. Through all literature, whether ancient or modern, through all thinking, through all statesmanship, all business, all life, this sacred yearning is breathed; and while the universal voice is going up, saying, "How long, O Lord, how long!" the response of God is clear, full, unmistakable. That belief in the future perfection of man and of human society, which cannot be uprooted in our hearts, does

¹ Preached before the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, October 5, 1880.

not deceive us. The glorious day to which it turns forward our wistful eyes is surely coming, coming, coming! God keeps the times and seasons in His own power. One day is with Him as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. But His servant John, whom He inspired to show unto us what should be in the end of the world, says: "I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea."

By "a new heaven and a new earth" we are to understand the whole race of mankind, morally and spiritually renewed. The passing away of "the first heaven and the first earth" signifies that the present divided and hostile condition of the races of men shall give way to a universal reign of peace and goodwill. And in the striking picture of a world in which there is "no more sea" is assured to us the mastery of all natural forces as well as all moral and spiritual, so that mankind shall no more be kept from coming together into that brotherhood of love in which they cannot but believe, and for which they instinctively yearn.

The sea offered only images of terror to the mind of those to whom St. John wrote. It bounded the known world. They peopled with direful fancies the regions which lay beyond its distant rim. Meaning by the word "sea" the Mediterranean, with which they were chiefly conversant, it would suggest to them ideas of distance and separation; long and perilous voyages, which would not bring them to friends, but to savage and hostile tribes.

No doubt all these ideas were in the mind of the rapt seer when he used his beautiful image. He is carried forward by the Spirit of God into the time

when Christ shall be the universal King. It is the glory and blessedness of that day which his vivid figure paints. He means to say that a time is coming, in the history of our world, when the dominion of man over nature shall be complete, the sea even not blocking the pathways of his love; when he shall regard no place as the abode of mystery or danger; and when that separation, difficulty of access, and hostility which now divide the nations from one another, and of which the sea is a striking symbol, shall give place to an easy, brotherly, and uniformly delightful intercourse among all the inhabitants of our globe.

The march of the human family toward this blessed state began in the dawn of history and is still going forward. Let me speak to you a little of the means by which the great renovation is to come about: first, of some of the natural and human means; secondly, of the supernatural, as seen in the gospel, or more especially in the work of Christian missions.

One of the first class of means, which has done much and may yet do something toward bringing our race together into a brotherhood of love, is geographical discovery. Man's knowledge of the new world he had been bidden to subdue and have dominion over was for a long time partial and vague. Each knew his own neighborhood, but there was no common knowledge shared by all. As men scattered abroad after the confusion of tongues, they did not send back reports of themselves, and early traditions grew dim; hence in a few centuries the Old World was peopled with tribes who knew almost nothing of one another. But in due time journeys, and even voyages, of discovery began to be made. Adventurous men went forth to search out the lands, and they returned to

tell what they had found. Thus the small circle of geography, which had been each man's world, began to be widened. The dwellers in Egypt, Syria, and Midian heard that they were neighbors to one another; and they sought intercourse, though chiefly for plunder and blood. The islands of the sea, also, and the remotest parts of the continents, were brought gradually within the circle of this common knowledge. Thus that vagueness and fear which had been connected with the idea of distance began to yield to a pleasant curiosity and the feeling of society. The shepherd of Mesopotamia felt less alone at knowing that other hearts, precisely like his own, were beating far up the Nile, on the table-lands of China, throughout the wilds of Europe, and on the bosom of that great deep whose terrible majesty filled him with awe. But vastly more toward bringing the earth's surface to the knowledge of all men has been done in modern times. Columbus and his successors robbed the sea of its mystery. The exact form and size of the earth have been found out. Not an islet glitters on the surface of the blue waters but some one has seen and reported it. Wherever man can live, this work of discovery has been done; and now, in the central parts of Africa, and toward the northern and the southern pole, the work is going on, sure not to stop till the last corner, and shore, and height, and fastness of the earth have been forced to give up their secrets. This genius of discovery ranges the earth as the astronomer's glass sweeps the heavens. It is rapidly filling up the blanks on our maps. It is giving to all parts of the world a reality and nearness in our thoughts, which tend to take from man everywhere his sense of loneliness or isolation.

Another natural means of bringing men together into fraternal relations has been the establishment of colonies. This adds a tie which mere discovery could not give; the attachment, namely, to a common ancestry. Though every man is our brother, and in the broadest sense we cannot speak of different ancestors, yet there is a peculiar interest binding together those who think of the same country as their fatherland, or who are alike warmed with the blood of some heroic stock whose origin and fame they can distinctly trace. The Phœnician colonies, along the southern shore of the Mediterranean, were drawn to one another as the native tribes could not be; for, with a common affection, they remembered the mother city. So when that migration southward from the northern border of Greece began, and the isthmus below Corinth and the islands near its coast were settled by people claiming a common lineage, the new cities entered into fraternal alliances more or less wide, before which the first owners of the soil melted away. And this brotherhood of states went on increasing for a long time, gaining for itself footholds in new lands, held together by the belief in their oneness of race. This tie of kindred has steadily grown more powerful as the world has grown older. And it is not impossible that the time will come, in the blessed future opening before us, when all mankind, however scattered abroad, will trace their lineage to a single source; all decaying tribes having wasted away before the one dominating people which turns proudly to a single origin and to a single career among the nations. From the sources of the Amazon, out of the rich valleys of Central Africa and the uplands of Asia, from the sides of the North, the blooming prairie, and the

coral islands of the Pacific, threads of tender remembrance may draw all hearts toward a common centre of name and traditions.

In the work of reuniting the scattered fragments of humanity, commerce also bears a notable part. The arrangement of things in the world is such that what nature and labor produce in one country are taken to other countries for the promotion of the common welfare. Hence the business of carrying, — the commerce whose lines run in all directions and cross one another at almost every point of the earth's surface. The ships sailing on the remotest sea are bringing each nation of men into kindly relations with the entire world. An emperor on the continent of Europe dare not begin a war till he knows how it will affect the merchants of Canton, London, and San Francisco. Nothing that makes trade unprofitable, or that interferes greatly with it, will be long tolerated. There are but few nations now which refuse to come into this world-congress of exchangers, — this brotherhood of buyers and sellers all over the earth, who control kings and presidents and lawgivers. It cannot be denied that the Sandwich Islands were the sooner redeemed from barbarism by lying as they did in the highway of the world's commerce. Let any country succeed in opening a thrifty trade between its own ports and the ports of other countries, a trade whose profits are equal to all concerned, and it needs little other warrant that its rights will be respected. The Hottentot can bear no hatred toward the Englishman who takes his ivory and gives him its full value in useful fabrics. The ice-dealer of Bombay is on friendly terms with the New England shipper. The shoemakers of Lynn are interested in the success of the

South American hunter. An untimely frost in a Western valley, or a flood in France, or a tribal war in Asia, or the burning of a great city, is often a world-wide calamity. Rich men whose homes are in Paris have been made poor by a drought in New York or Ohio. Places of abode are changed for life, — the Turk dwelling in Boston, and the Bostonian in Constantinople; the New Yorker making Shanghai his home, and the Chinaman residing in New York. Thus it is that all nations, both the civilized and the barbarous, make one community; and it is for the interest of each of the individuals so connected that peace and goodwill should everywhere exist.

In naming the more obvious means by which the scattered tribes of men have been brought near to each other, the applications of scientific discovery should not be forgotten. The seaports of the Old World are not half so far from us as they once were, owing to the use of steam. And of the telegraph we may say that it has more than annihilated space, both on the land and on the sea. The electric current is swifter than the earth's motion; it steals a march on time; what took place in the far-off Orient we read of at an earlier hour of our day. This swift spreading of the news to all points of the earth is a terror to evil-doers. It helps the cause of justice and goodwill. There is no place where the worker of iniquity can hide himself save by the connivance of faithless officials. When he steps in disguise on the remotest shore, a warrant of arrest may meet him. Wonderful as all this is, yet who doubts that science has other secrets to declare? Wisdom will not die with us. That torch of inventive genius which the former times have given to us, we shall hand on to those who succeed us. Human inge-

nunity will not rest till the basis of a world-wide intimacy among men has been laid. It will be because they wish to dwell apart, hated and hating one another, if they fail to come together into an all-embracing brotherhood.

And just here it is, dear friends, that we see the need of an agency which is above nature or man's power, to change the selfishness of the human heart into the spirit of love. That spirit brought down to us in Christ Jesus, and given to His people to be spread through the world, is the only power which can make one family of all the tribes of men. God himself must make the nations one by giving to them His Son. The triumph of the gospel everywhere, and especially in the form of Christian missions, is our only hope that the golden age of love, of which the poet and philanthropist dream, will ever dawn. The spirit of Christ in His church, carrying the life of God to every creature, alone can give the new heaven and the new earth. You will admit that I have not undervalued ordinary causes, as preachers are sometimes charged with doing. In considering how St. John's vision is to be realized, I have given due credit to discovery, emigration, commerce, and the better control of natural forces. But a great work still remains undone, which nothing in nature or man shows any signs of accomplishing. The union which they bring about is based on self-interest, and is wholly unstable. Another law of action, even that love and self-sacrifice which came down from heaven, must be planted in men's hearts, in order to make them in deed and in truth one family.

Let me show, then, why Christian missions, embodying as they do the spirit of divine love, tend directly to bring mankind together into a single brotherhood.

They proceed on the principle of sacrifice, — are a constant laying down of life for the good of others. This is true from the centre to the circumference of the work. Starting from each home office, and going out on all sides, we find at every step, and in the farthest mission field, self-denial and self-sacrifice. There is an outlay of time, strength, and sympathy, for which no worldly return is sought or expected. Poor widows give their farthings, and others their larger sums ; families live on inadequate salaries, uncounted hours are taken from business, days of prayer and nights of anxiety are spent, and no reward is thought of or desired. It is all bread taken from the mouth at the Lord's bidding and cast upon the waters, not to be gathered again until the eternal shore is reached. Is it for their own sake, think you, that the young husband and wife, standing on the vessel's deck after the parting hymn has been sung, turn their faces whithersoever the spirit sends them ? Is it for any selfish reason that the aged parents, who have reared them so tenderly, watch the lessening sail, and wave their tearful good-by as it vanishes from their view ? Do they find any return, as the world counts dividends, in going back to look at the pictures of their departed children, and to speak their loved names ? “Not for our sake, but for the sake of those who know not Christ,” is the answer which confounds the selfish man when he asks, “Why this waste ?” Follow that little ship's company on the way. Hear them speak of early associations, of the family circle, the school, the friends, the familiar trees about the homestead, the loved streams of water, the grand old mountains. “What induced you to give up all that peace and sweetness of life amid the glorious surroundings of your birthplace ?” we ask. There is

a swelling of great emotions within them as they hear the question; and with brimming yet brave and up-turned eyes they say: "We go to seek those for whom our Lord died." Is it a pleasure to them to be confronted daily with strange, wild faces, to miss the dear mother-tongue, to be obliged to preach the blessed words of Christ in an uncouth and inadequate dialect? Look through their dwelling: its furniture spoiled by the heat of the climate, or its walls not able to keep out the wintry wind; greedy insects invading every corner of it, poisonous reptiles crawling over and around it, hungry beasts of prey stealthily watching in the jungle hard by, its table spread with food which only their wish to be strong for their self-denying work can make palatable. "Does this pay?" you ask. "Not as the money-changers reckon pay," they answer. "But we," they add, "have another motive: we are to Christ a willing sacrifice, to be used of Him in planting here His saving gospel." Think you that no struggle takes place in them when they are forced to send their children home to be educated? Is it such a motive as you act from in secular affairs, which persuades them to let their families be broken up? which strengthens them to lie down and die alone, beneath the ice-hills of Greenland, on the banks of the Gaboon river, or within the suffocating walls of Mosul? You behold here a new and marvelous power at work in the world; something which is above man or nature, which came from the God who is love. Here is no thirst for fame, glory, or riches, but a longing to be offered up for the good of others. This spirit is not due to commerce, to science, to the finding and peopling of new lands. It is the spirit of the gospel, for lack of which the world has been full of discord. Everything which

seemed to favor universal peace and goodwill has been spoiled by some element of self-interest. But here self is devoted to the wellbeing of those who cannot repay; and we all see that this spirit, if made everywhere dominant, cannot but bring all men into one brotherhood. It is the same spirit out of which God sent His Son into the world; and out of which the Son was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. This entire freedom from self-seeking, this eagerness not to be ministered unto but to minister, this lowliness and suffering for the sake of others, which the mighty men of the world have never shown, but which is the spirit of Christian missions, is our only hope of the new heaven and the new earth. How can there be any war, or oppression, or other abuse of man by man, where each one is seeking not his own, and no one owes anything but to love his brother? Such a spirit is all-powerful; it tames ferocity, it melts the icy heart, it overawes wickedness. Christ's kingdom, the kingdom of suffering for the good of others, though the least of all seeds in the beginning, is our only reliance if the races of men are ever to become a single family; for nowhere else do we find that self-surrender and toiling for our neighbor's good which are the only possible basis of a real and enduring brotherhood.

But facts, no less than the spirit of missions, show that they can make mankind one family.

The true churches of Christ are already made one by their endeavor to give the gospel to every creature. Persons interested in the same objects, and having knowledge of each other, are one in heart, however scattered in space. To them there is no more sea, or separating distance; for the electric chain of sympathy makes them one. There is a republic of letters, of

science, of art, — each world-wide. But these fraternities do not rest on a permanent basis, for they do not grow out of unselfish suffering; the spirit which pervades them is not that of the gospel. The fellowship of missions is as enduring as the soul of man; it is deep, sweet, tender, beyond the power of anything to disturb. This gentle and pervasive love, whose golden threads go through the world, is revealing itself more and more. When the states and kingdoms are in commotion, hurricanes of war screaming through the sky, this soft melody of Christian hearts is uninterrupted; and if we lay our ear low and hearken patiently, we can hear its breathings, the faint prelude of a mighty anthem, heralding the reign of the Prince of Peace.

There is another fact of most touching interest, which shows how Christian missions are making all lands one. Almost every Christian, in every part of the world, has some kinsman or near friend toiling on the other side of the globe; or, may be, already sleeping in Jesus, where he fell, on some remote continent or island, or within the still depths of the sea. There are those in New England who think tenderly of St. Helena, of the Isle of France, of the hills of Nestoria, of the widely scattered lands made dear to them by the kindred dust of a Hall, a Judson, or a Boardman, a Grant, a Lobdell, a Benjamin, a Goodell, a Scudder, a Poor. These lines of affection, making foreign soil native, go out all ways and to the remotest points; and to the heart which thus loves and communes there is no more sea. You mock it, denying its own sweet witness, if you say that it is not one with its kindred who have died in Christ. It lingers near the burial-ground of Batticotta in the twilight hour, and is soothed by

the spicy breezes which blow soft from Ceylon's Isle. It walks through the exhumed palaces of Nineveh, and looks wistfully out on the lowly grave-stones beside the Tigris. It sits beneath the cedars of Lebanon, and hears in the sighing of their branches the voice of its own communion. The cocoa and the palm, though as far as the East and the West from it, are its own trees. For it is the cemeteries, the places where our own kindred sleep, which our hearts specially claim; there we dwell, oftentimes more truly than where we are visibly present. Thus every continent and island and valley and mountain, around and all over the world, is fast becoming fatherland and home to the brotherhood of Christian hearts. Our self-love and patriotism are widening into an affection which embraces the world; into that holy and divine love which will not rest from its blessed ministry till the lowest child of Adam has found the tree of life; till all nations are of one heart and one speech, and the soul of a brother looks out from every eye, and to live is to serve, and to labor is to love.

That the spirit of Christian missions is able to do this, is foreshadowed by what they have already done. Whatever they touch, they consecrate and make immortal. Go to Williamstown, and you will be shown the spot where Mills and his associates met to pray. That spot, more than the college, makes the name of the town dear in all lands. Go to Andover, and they will remind you that there those missionaries studied. Go to Salem, and it will be said to you, "Here the first missionaries were ordained." I have met a shipmaster who remembered with pride that the first missionaries to the Sandwich Islands sailed with him. There are thousands of men and women living in the

far-off East and on the islands of the sea, who know Boston only as the place from which missionaries are sent.

What marvelous power the Christian missionary has! The memory of David Brainerd is to-day a converting power, and Henry Martyn helps hold the university of Cambridge to the foundations of its faith in Christ. The power of such men is not merely natural; it is supernatural. Their strength may be small, and they may be young and without earthly prestige, yet the life of Christ has through their consecration to Him filled them, and by them He speaks, as never man spake, to His brethren sitting in darkness. The poor idolater sees in them a love not born of man but of God, and he gladly takes the message of salvation which they bring him from the Father of His spirit. I doubt not there are some in this assembly who have been welcomed where the ambassadors of no civil power would be safe. Those of us who have read the life of David Livingstone cannot doubt that, if there were a hundred such as he in Africa, a hundred such as he in China, in Japan, a hundred such as he in Turkey, in India, in Burmah, all preaching Jesus Christ as the one hope and King of men, the great multitude whose voice is as the voice of mighty thunders would soon be heard, saying, "Alleluia, for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth."

Read the story of Coleridge Patteson, late bishop of the English church at the Melanesian Islands, if you would know what the missionary spirit may do for a man. He was the son of Sir John Patteson, born so recently as 1827, brought up to all the elegances and costly pleasures usual to the homes of the English nobility. He was a scholar at Eton when Victoria

came to the throne, — a favorite of teachers and classmates, and their petted champion on the cricket-field. From this proud school under the shadow of Windsor Castle he went to Oxford, the holy fire of missions already burning in his heart. Upon graduating, he turned his back on all the pride and glory of English high life, and went in the spirit of Christ and His cross to as wretched a set of tribes as can be found on the earth. Far to the southeast of Australia, in his little ship which he named the Southern Cross, he toiled from island to island, devoting his whole earthly fortune to the work, — carpenter, mason, gardener, and farmer, cook and seamster and nurse and doctor, student, translator, teacher, catechist, minister; declining to return home, asking that his portion of the estate might be given to his mission. Thus he bore up through loneliness, against opposition, under disease, till at last, in the freshness of his glorious manhood, the natives who loved him, unfortunately mistaking him for a slave-hunter known to be prowling around, suddenly rushed upon him out of an ambush as he was one day leaving his ship, and took his life before he could tell them who he was. One such heroic life as that is worth a thousand lives dawdled away in luxurious ease. Jesus Christ formed within him made him such a centre of attraction, and such an uplifting and purifying power, as promised in a little while to make all those poor savages one fold under the one Divine Shepherd.

If you still doubt the power of this all-devoting love, which is the soul of missions, to tame wild natives and make them one family, read the story of Miss Pattison, “Sister Dora,” in the festering dens and hospitals of Walsall, England. It was the missionary

spirit which, in that nominally Christian but degraded and wicked city, made her the adored queen whose word was law to the brutal and vicious creatures about her. What a day it was on which she was buried! The confused roar of machinery and the thud and clang of steam-hammers ceased. The chimneys of furnaces and foundries belched forth no flames that day. Only a heavy cloud of smoke lay like a pall on the great sooty town. Wretched toilers swarmed forth by the thousand and ten thousand, their hearts bowed by the magic power of her all-devoting love, as the trees of the wood are bowed by the wind.

Ah, dear friends, the true missionary is clothed with a sacredness which awes the roving child of the desert. His spirit of love teaches the wild Koord to be kind and merciful. His one thought of saving others, at the risk of his own life, charms the Hindoo mind away from superstition and bloody rites. How often kings have besought his good offices in treating with the savage chiefs whom they would win to friendly alliance! The deadly intolerance of Islam is yielding in the presence of the heavenly love which he brings to it. Chinese exclusiveness levels its walls at the approach of a pure gospel. Japan, her heart thrilled by the morning beams of Christianity, is sending her brightest minds to be moulded by its hand, and these are carrying more and more of the spirit of redemption back into their marvelous country. This missionary work, which all who understand it so eagerly welcome, has already begun to make strange races to be of one heart and one mind. Great is the work which has been already done. Yet the near future gives promise of something vastly greater. God is opening doors into all lands, where eager hands are

stretched out to receive the blessing. Let all Christians give to this blessed work according to their resources, and toil in it as they have the opportunity and power, and the day is not far off when the one kingdom which all other kingdoms are to help make up shall be proclaimed. The yearning of the human heart for fellowship with all other hearts shall be met. Every man's love shall find completeness in the ocean of universal love. God, who is all, shall be in all; and this divine indwelling shall make all one; there shall be neither Jew nor Greek, barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free, but all shall be one, and shall grow up together into Christ, who is the Head.

What occasion have we, dear friends, to doubt that the Holy Spirit, in whose dispensation we are now living, is fully able to renew our entire world? Are we not doing dishonor to His blessed name and office when we say that Christ must again visibly come, take from the Holy Spirit His unfinished work, and Himself complete the bringing together of mankind in Him? Is it not enough that the Comforter takes of Christ and shows to men, and convinces them of sin and righteousness and judgment; but must He be thrust out of His office, and Christ do what He has failed to accomplish, before the world can be converted to God? This certainly is not the view which Christ Himself gave when He told His disciples it was expedient for them that He should go away, since if He went not away the Comforter would not come. What mean those words, and the greater works than His of which He spoke, if the Holy Spirit is not adequate to all the wants of the church in carrying out our Lord's last command? The nature of the gospel and the history of its progress thus far ought to con-

vince us that the present dispensation of grace is enough for all the work we are to do. Going outside of the church, in the province of civil affairs, think what a blessed contrast between the present state of things and that which prevailed even so late as three centuries ago! In all domestic legislation and in international law there has been a wonderful advance, and this advance has been a steady approach toward the teachings of Christ. Nations are growing more and more ashamed of anything on their statute-books or in their administration which the spirit of the gospel forbids. Ah, dear friends, we put asunder church and state, but Christ knows which is His! They were both ordained of God, nor can we say that either of them alone represents the one kingdom into which all other kingdoms are to be absorbed. The present religious sects may fade away, and it may be some form of civil power embodying the spirit of the New Testament, and world-wide in sway, which Christ shall own as His universal church when He comes in the clouds of heaven.

At any rate, whether we study the history of the state or the church, we find bright proofs that all the aid needed for the conversion of the world is now at our command. You cannot conceive of any more marvelous victories of the gospel under some dispensation yet to come than took place in the apostolic age, than attended the labors of Chrysostom and Augustine, than followed the preaching of the Wesleys, Whitefield, and Jonathan Edwards. How often we have seen God take men out of the depths of ignorance and want, and with them mightily increase His kingdom, thus shaming our lack of faith in the agencies for good which are already ours! If you

think Christ must needs come in some new form of power, in order that the nations may be given to Him, what do you do with the story of the Sandwich Islands or of the island of Madagascar? Could the recent history of Madagascar be any more wonderful if Christ were visibly with us? At the beginning of this century it was peopled by a nation of idolaters, skilled in many of the arts and ways of civilized life, but who were so sunk in the vices and crimes of their heathenism that they might have sat for St. Paul's picture in the First of Romans. But to-day, through God's blessing on the work of the English missionaries, they are a Christian nation, with churches, schools, a native ministry, wise laws, social and domestic order, libraries, newspapers; their queen and many of her chief officers devoted servants of Christ. Who art thou that darest to say, "Are there not yet four months, and then cometh the harvest?" Can you imagine any transformation in the future which shall be more wonderful than this? Go to that island, and tell its people that Christ is coming back to our world some day to subdue men under Him, and they would not understand you. They would look on you with astonishment. Tell them that the gospel as now revealed is to save only a handful of our race, and they would not take you for a Christian, but for a Hebrew of the Hebrews. They would say that the millennial glory is already theirs, and that they are so blessed in this as not to be able to think of one yet to come. The utmost they can pray for is that the light which has visited them may spread over the world.

Not only do we need simply the power which we already have, but where has any more been promised us? Was it not all given, and pointed to as our war-

rant for attempting the conquest of the world, in the hour when Christ ascended to the Father? O ye who doubt the present, and who peer anxiously into the future for some new revelation of Christ's power, go out with your risen Lord from Jerusalem to the Mount of Olives. What does He say as He is about to be parted from you? Does He say that you must wait for His final coming, and only then see His kingdom begin to prevail? No, dear friends. He looks for no new sources of strength to Him and His church in the future. But He says — oh, listen to what He says! listen! — “All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth!” Therefore what? Stand gazing up into heaven? whisper among the faint-hearted that we cannot go over and possess the land? preach that our largest success must needs be but partial till this same Jesus is again visibly with us? No, dear friends; not this, nor anything like it, but something very different from it! “All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth, therefore GO — and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and lo, I AM with you alway, even UNTO the end of the world.”

ADDRESSES.

SAMUEL ADAMS.

IN the long night of national perplexity, when our way is doubtful and those chosen to lead us give conflicting counsels, it may cheer us to look up, for a little, to the stars of our political heavens, — to those still but ever faithful monitors whom no ambitions, or party quarrels, or maddening greed of office, can persuade to mislead and betray us. The revolving century is lifting many of those stars into the horizon; bright names of the Revolutionary period, which gave birth to those ideas and principles that are still the hope and the guide of the republic. Central and foremost, and in certain respects forever greatest, in that benign constellation, shines the name of SAMUEL ADAMS. It is not necessary now to account for that obscurity which has rested on his more private and personal history, except to say that it was, in part, a result of political animosities which embittered his old age; a result too, in part, of his having outlived those who knew him well in the days of the Revolutionary struggle; as also, in part, of his devotion to the public good, which was so constant and absorbing as to allow no time or thought for recording personal memoirs. His career illustrates the saying that vast and mighty forces are concealed. The power of gravitation is not

conspicuous, yet every atom of matter in the universe does its bidding. There were occasions, as we shall see, when he came out of his pavilion and assumed a leadership to which no other courage was equal, making himself the conspicuous mark at which the bolts of British tyranny were especially levelled; yet, so long as the good cause went forward, he preferred to toil out of sight, leaving it for the less devoted to draw the gaze and the applause of the public. Only the more penetrating minds, such as Thomas Jefferson and those who have carefully studied the annals of that time, have discovered how emphatically he was the master spirit in the cause of independence. He is known in history as the "Father of the Revolution," — a title which by common consent had even in his lifetime been accorded him. Nor does any other title so fully, and yet without flattery, indicate the great and initial work by which he laid, almost with his own hands alone, the foundations of our free nationality. Unlike Washington in military glory and the proprietorship of vast estates, unlike Lincoln in the crown of martyrdom and those homely charms which fit one to become a popular idol, unlike them both in the renown and opportunities of high office, he was every whit their peer in devotion to the rights of man, their superior in the Puritanic integrity of his character; and he fixed for them both, and for all his successors, the corner-stone of American liberties, from which the whole building has been growing up toward a perfect temple, only to realize in its latest completeness the ideal which inspired him.

As the great founder of the Hebrew state was called to his work while he yet ministered as a child before Eli, so this American Samuel seemed to receive his consecration almost in infancy. Destined to find his

Amalekite in the British king, his Saul in John Hancock, and his David only in Washington, his early training was in a school that furnished him well for the bold and delicate office. The father of our little Samuel, besides being deacon in the church and captain of militia, was a leader in the politics of Boston. At his house a few of the citizens met regularly to discuss the interests of the colonies and their relations to the mother country, — known, from the connection of most of them with the shipbuilding interest, as the “Caulkers’ Club,” whence the more familiar word “caucus.” Deacon Adams, like the true Puritan that he was, supposed, as a matter of course, that his promising son would be a minister. But while his hopes and frequent hints to the son looked this way, the influence of the Caulkers’ Club was doing its silent work; and it seemed to the boy, in the pauses of the earnest discussions, that something whispered within him, “Thou art called unto liberty.” This faint admonition grew clearer as he neared the age of manhood; and when, upon the day of his graduation at Harvard College, in an essay on the query “Whether it be lawful to resist the supreme magistrate if the commonwealth cannot be otherwise preserved,” he took the affirmative of the question, and boldly maintained the right of the subject to defend himself against the encroachments of the monarch, the spirit of Freedom seemed to descend upon him, and set him apart from all other callings, to be her own especial champion.

The father no longer insisted on his plan for the ministry, yielding to what he regarded as the manifest will of Heaven; yielding the more readily, perhaps, for the reason that British legislation, interfering

with the rights of the colonists, had already reduced him to the verge of poverty. He was willing that Samuel should be a law unto himself, and enter the dread arena against the power by which father and son both had been so bitterly injured. No one watched with more tender interest the opening career of the youthful champion than his elder sister Mary. Her sympathy and counsels seem to have been to him a daily inspiration, drawing from him in later years the noble remark: "That is a happy young man who has had an elder sister upon whom he could rely for advice and counsel in youth."

He had no love of money. It was not to rebuild his broken fortunes, but from an innate love of justice, that he ventured upon the unequal contest. Business, with which he dallied for a time, languished upon his hands. Far other was the work he had been sent to do. We cannot say how early in life he formed the distinct purpose of laboring for American independence, but there is no recorded act of his within the sphere of politics, even from the beginning, which did not tend directly to this result. His whole life, from 1748, when he was twenty-six years old, to the time of the first peace with England, — nearly a third of a century, — was a single campaign. And never did Napoleon, or Wellington, or Grant plan a campaign more thoroughly, or "fight it out" more unswervingly.

One of his first steps was the organization of a political club, and the issue of a weekly paper called the "Political Advertiser." In that paper he published a series of essays on liberty, and on the relations of England to America, remarkable for their bold speculation, profound insight, mature thought,

and classic purity of style, anticipating almost the whole ground of debate in the Revolutionary struggle. The subjects of these essays were carefully discussed in the club before giving them to the public. Thus the little circle of patriots were drawn more closely together, came to be of one heart and mind, and were fired with a common enthusiasm; and the opinions which went forth from them had a sober and well-considered look which gave them great weight with the thoughtful reader. It came to be a matter of no small honor, among the more aspiring young men, to be a member of this club; and Adams watched it as the very centre of all his hopes, excluding from it any who leaned to the royal side, but gladly admitting such as he could count on in the battle for colonial rights. It was the furnace, kept blazing night and day, at which the weapons of liberty were forged, and to which the patriots of the time came to light their torches. There was one feature of this club which, I think, will commend it to all good wives and sisters and mothers. It seems to have met for the most part in Mr. Adams's own house. It was domesticated in his family, mingling its earnest discussions with the prattle of childhood and the gentle words of woman, around his ample hearthstone. Hospitality, love of home, and reverence for true womanhood, were thus sacredly intertwined with his devotion to freedom. His first wife was the daughter of his minister [at the New South Church]; and we may judge how tender was the charm she had woven round his life, by what he wrote in the family Bible the day she died: "To her husband she was as sincere a friend as she was a faithful wife. Her exact economy, in all her relative capacities, her kindred on his side as well as her own

admire. She ran her Christian race with remarkable steadiness, and finished in triumph. She left two small children. God grant they may inherit her graces!"

The light of the home thus early quenched was re-lighted after an interval of seven years, Elizabeth Wells succeeding to the place of Elizabeth Checkley. She proved a worthy successor; and from that time forward to the day of his death, patriotism and domestic love blended their fervent rays in his simple household. Mr. Bancroft says: "He was a tender husband, an affectionate parent, and relaxing from severer cares he could vividly enjoy the delights of conversation with friends; but the walls of his modest mansion never witnessed dissipation, or levity, or frivolous amusements, or anything inconsistent with the discipline of the man whose incessant prayer was that 'Boston might become a Christian Sparta.' He was poor, and so contented with poverty that men censured him as 'wanting wisdom to estimate riches at their just value.' But he was frugal and temperate; and his wife, endowed with the best qualities of a New England woman, knew how to work with her own hands, so that the small resources, which men of the least opulent class would have deemed a very imperfect support, were sufficient for his simple wants. Yet such was the union of dignity with economy that whoever visited him saw around him every circumstance of propriety. Above all, he combined with poverty a stern and incorruptible integrity." Such was the home in which the child of independence was born and cradled. It is no extravagance, but simple truth only, to say of that "modest mansion," that it was the headquarters of the party of liberty for nearly

a generation. Thither came Otis, Warren, Hancock, and a host of others continually, to catch its inspiration; and from it went forth those calm but electric words which fired the hearts of the people, and marshalled them to the dread encounter. Toward that plain dwelling the eyes of the poor and lowly were ever turned as the citadel of their strength. "Samuel Adams during all his life was their tribune." They saw his withering indignation falling perpetually on the haughty few who "despise their neighbor's happiness because he wears a worsted cap or leathern apron." "Most of his public papers," says one of his biographers, "were written in a study or library adjoining his bedroom; and his wife, after his death, related how in the stillness of the night she used to listen to the incessant motion of the pen in the next room, whence the solitary lamp, which lighted the patriot in his labors, was visible. One who knew him personally, and whose business obliged him for a long time to pass after midnight by the house, says that he seldom failed to see the study lighted, no matter how far the night was gone; 'and he knew that Sam Adams was hard at work writing against the Tories.'" ¹ Well did that solitary lamp typify the mission of Adams, whose soul was bright with hope for his country in her darkest hours, who toiled sleeplessly on while others sank exhausted amid thickening dangers, whose steady enthusiasm was a star that ever cheered the benighted patriot.

His plan, at which he thus toiled from youth to old age, and which opened out more and more till it became commensurate with the history of his times, may be sketched in few words: first, the education of

¹ Wells's *Life*, vol. i. p. 202.

the people into a profound knowledge and vivid consciousness of their rights as freemen ; second, a fearless exposure, to his countrymen and the world, of the encroachments of Britain upon those rights ; third, the arousing of the masses to that lofty patriotism which should prevent their being bribed into compliance with the royal pleasure ; fourth, the union of all the colonies in one grand struggle for independence. We stand fixed with admiring wonder in view of the undertaking thus briefly outlined. Could anything short of a Divine inspiration have nerved that one obscure man to attempt so mighty a deliverance of his people ? Was it not a rare instance of the moral sublime when he thus entered the lists against all the ideas of the Old World, and challenged the most imperial power on earth to a hand-to-hand encounter in championship of human rights ? We think of the lofty determination of the printer-boy of Newburyport, who more than thirty years ago vowed eternal hostility to the slave-power in the South ; of the purpose of Columbus, that child amid the warehouses of Genoa, to discover a new world ; of the lonely monk of Wittenberg, lifting his battle-axe against papal supremacy : for it is only such undertakings as those that can parallel the stupendous plan of Adams. If we were to seek a parallel in sacred history, it would be the shepherd of Midian, coming down out of Horeb from the bush that burned, to deliver his suffering countrymen from Egyptian bondage, and lead them through the dread wilderness that stretched from the Red Sea to the river Jordan. It was in the rayless midnight that the immortal hero lighted his solitary lamp ; nor did the steady beam of that lamp for a moment grow dim till the Aurora of Independence had

purpled the eastern sky. That faithful pen moved incessantly on in the little chamber, mingling its rustle with the whispered prayers of the waking wife, till its sentences bristled into bayonets and swords, and the dream of the patriot became the heritage of the world.

A benign Providence seemed to be with Adams from first to last, favoring his vast design. The products of his prolific pen, meant to educate his countrymen to a clear knowledge and jealous guardianship of their rights, were sown broadcast during the mild administrations of Shirley and Pownall. They were of just the nature to waken a responsive chord in the popular heart, and radical enough to provoke earnest replies from royalists both at home and in Europe, but they excited no immediate alarm. There was hardly a ripple as yet on the surface of affairs to herald the gathering tempest; the revolution destined to burst over a continent had not scented the breeze. Natural rights, chartered rights, and the constitutional rights of British subjects were thoroughly discussed in all their relations and bearings, and the good seed had taken deep root in a congenial soil before the winter of despotic rule came on.

The change on the part of England from a mild to an aggressive policy could not intimidate but only exasperate a people thus prepared. What now most behooved the great liberator was to watch the course of the British ministry, and of Bernard, Hutchinson, and Gage, and drag forth their oppressive measures into the light of day. This he did with sleepless vigilance, and with a vividness of description that stirred almost to madness the sensitive minds of his countrymen. Did England propose that the colonists should pay

the expenses of the French war, in which they had already so grievously suffered? That proposal was known in every hamlet of Massachusetts, where it met a proud defiance. The newspaper columns were the columns on which Adams relied, and by which he conquered. They flew everywhere, bristling with his sharp exposures of schemes to cripple the finances, the manufactures, the trade of the colonies, and to reduce them to a state of spiritless dependence on the mother country. Nothing could be more opportune, since he asked nothing better for his purpose, than unjust revenue laws, attempts to tax an unrepresented people, and to quarter soldiers in time of peace upon the unoffending inhabitants. These events were not valued in themselves so much as counters with which he played the grand game of American Independence. There were murmurs, and defiant threats, and effigy-burnings, and riots, and processions in the streets of Boston; and in them all Adams was seldom prominent or even visible: but the whole world knew that his finger was upon the springs of the popular indignation; they heard the uproar, and saw the wrathful countenances of outraged freemen, and then turned wonderingly to that little chamber and its lonely lamp where the patient toiler was bent to his midnight task.

But it was in awakening a martyr spirit among the people that Adams showed his consummate power. They had risen up in wrath against their oppressors: could they be taught to suffer the loss of all things, rather than yield their liberties? Here his own example was the charm which drew and transfigured others. They knew that he had made himself poor by his devotion to freedom. They knew that once, when

a negro slave was presented him, he had said, "A slave cannot live in my house. If she comes, she must be free." They knew of the price set on his life, and of the secret plots to carry him to England to be tried for treason. They knew that he alone, with Hancock whom he influenced, was excepted in the royal pardon on condition of future submission. They knew also that gold had been offered him in his poverty, and the honors of office, and even a patent of nobility, in the hope of drawing him from his high purpose; and that to the bearer of these overtures he had replied with flaming scorn: "Sir, I trust I have long since made my peace with the King of kings. No personal consideration shall induce me to abandon the righteous cause of my country. Tell Governor Gage it is the advice of Samuel Adams to him no longer to insult the feelings of an exasperated people." Such a spirit in such a man could not but be contagious. It went forth, a beam of enchanted light, from the sacred chamber, touching the souls of the masses, and transfusing them with a heroic readiness to suffer; so that they could look without a murmur on their ships rotting at the wharves, could deny themselves the luxury of tea and the use of foreign fabrics, could contemplate with an air of triumph their ruined finances, could abstain from lamb's flesh to make themselves independent of the European wool-grower.

We can hardly appreciate, in this day of easy communication, the herculean task which Adams undertook, of uniting all the colonies in the struggle for independence. But without the telegraph, the railroad, or the steam-vessel, undaunted by the isolated condition of the settlements, and the vast wilds stretching

between them, he set himself cheerfully to the work of bringing them into a single community. His success alone proved that the work was not impossible. How he overcame these obstacles is more than we can now explain. But somehow, by some invisible chord, he bound the hearts of Dickinson, Franklin, Jefferson, Gadsden, and of a host of other leaders like them, to his own; and through their writing and speeches, tremulous with the life that throbbed in him, the continent at length vibrated in unison to his master-touch.

Let no one suspect, because Adams chose to labor for the most part with his pen in retirement, that he lacked the courage or the ability to assume an open leadership when the exigencies of the cause required. He was willing to toil unobserved, and let others stand conspicuous in the public eye; but if they quailed at any time before the onset of some unusual danger, he was straightway found in the forefront of the conflict, moving like a tower of adamant into the very face of the enemy, as Sheridan, by rushing forward at the battle of Cedar Creek, stopped the flight of his panting legions and turned defeat into victory. There were at least three occasions on which Adams thus sprang to the rescue of his imperilled cause, snatching it from the very clutch of the royal hand, while his fellow-patriots were ready to give up all for lost, — once after the massacre of March the fifth. The determination of the king to press through his unjust measures by military power had borne its first bloody fruits. Eleven citizens, three of them slain outright, and but one of them having attempted any disturbance, had been struck by the murderous bullets of the troops [in King Street]. A terrible crisis had

come. Either the cause of independence must be abandoned, and America yielded up to the royal dictation, or this outrage must be avenged and its repetition be rendered impossible. But to defy the colossal power of England, — this was the step at which the people of Boston now stood aghast. It is three o'clock, the evening of the day after the massacre [March 6]. The citizens of the town are crowded into the Old South Church and along the street between the church and the King's Council Chamber. A committee, which has been to Lieutenant-Governor Hutchinson (who acted for the king) to represent the feelings of the inhabitants, is on its way to the church, "led by Samuel Adams, his head bared in reverence to the occasion, and his gray locks flowing in the wind." He reports to the eager multitude Hutchinson's evasive words; and they, now fired by his own invincible ardor, appoint him to return and tell the king's functionary that the two regiments must leave town at once. He stands again in the presence of the Royal Council. The representatives of the civil and military power of England are before him. Around him, dimly seen in the growing dusk of twilight, hang the portraits of British sovereigns and the insignia of empire. He calmly announces the people's ultimatum. Hutchinson, anxious to make his humiliation and that of his king as slight as possible, says that one regiment may go, and he will write to Governor Gage respecting the removal of the other. Then it was that the spirit of Samuel Adams rose up in majesty. "Drawing himself to his full height, determination flashing from his clear blue eye, he stretched forth his arm, 'which slightly shook with the energy of his soul,' and, gazing steadfastly upon the lieuten-

ant-governor, replied: 'If you have the power to remove one regiment, you have power to remove both. It is at your peril if you refuse. The meeting is composed of three thousand people. They are become impatient. A thousand men are already arrived from the neighborhood, and the whole country is in motion. Night is approaching. An immediate answer is demanded. Both regiments or none.'"¹ The king's council were smitten down and overawed by this terrible storm. In one moment the pride of Britain had gone crouching and cowering at the feet of the immortal patriot. The shadow receded not a whit, but only went forward with a mighty stride on the dial-plate of revolution. And the two regiments slunk away to a fort in Boston harbor, obeying the order of Adams so precipitately that Lord North ever after spoke of them as "Sam Adams's Regiments."

This, however, was but the beginning of victories won by the personal valor of Adams. Yielding for once the assumed right to enforce her will at the point of the bayonet, England was still determined to collect a revenue from the colonies. Would they stand to their non-importation agreements, and refuse at all hazards to receive her duty-paying merchandise? was now the question. This sharp issue was forced upon them by dispatching a quantity of tea to Boston, consigned to a Mr. Rotch. Adams, who was determined that the tea should not be landed, feared that the popular resolution might give way; and again he put himself in the van of the battle. The obnoxious article is in the harbor; and out of kindness to Mr. Rotch he is told that he may save it by sending it back to England. This he is willing to do; and the assem-

¹ Well's *Life of Adams*, vol. i. p. 323.

bled people wait quietly at Old South while he goes to Hutchinson for permission. Adams, knowing that the government would not yield but was resolved to test the mettle of Boston, had quietly made ready for the exigency. Let me give the rest in the words of Thomas Carlyle: "At three no Rotch, nor at four, nor at five; miscellaneous, plangent, intermittent speech instead, in tone sorrowful rather than indignant; at a quarter to six, here at length is Rotch: sun is long set, — has Rotch a clearance or not? Rotch reports at large, willing to be questioned and cross-questioned: 'Governor absolutely would not! My Christian friends, what could I or can I do?' There are by this time 7,000 people in [and about] Old South Meeting-house, very few tallow lights in comparison. Rotch's report done, the chairman (one Adams, 'American Cato') dissolves the sorrowful 7,000 with these words: 'This meeting declares that it can do nothing more to save the country.' Hark, however: almost on the instant, in front of the Old South Meeting-house, 'a terrific war-whoop, and about fifty Mohawk Indians,' — with whom Adams seems to be acquainted. Forward, without noise, to Griffin's Wharf; sentries all around there; a great silence in the neighborhood; three gangs busy, on the dormant tea-ships, opening their chests and punctually shaking them out into the sea. About ten P. M. all was finished; three hundred and forty-two chests of tea flung out to infuse in the Atlantic; the fifty Mohawks gone like a dream; and Boston sleeping more silently even than usual." It is easy to see, through these, the quaint sentences of the old hero-worshiper, his vast admiration for Samuel Adams. Here certainly was a marvelous instance of strategy

and personal power. One poor gentleman, by leaving his study and thus stepping to the front, outwits the king and the ministers, and breathes into every soul of his fellow-patriots an unconquerable zeal for liberty. Soldiers have left the field, tax-gatherers are routed; what next?

The last point in Adams's programme of independence is a Continental Congress. And it was in achieving this, if I mistake not, that his great abilities had their finest illustration. For this the popular mind, under his influence, had long been ripening. By prodigious efforts, — corresponding with leading men in the various colonies, persuading them to appoint committees of correspondence, and issuing circular letters from the Boston Committee, — he had, after long years of weary toil, made this concert of action practicable. Some of the other colonies, inspired by him, had already chosen delegates for a Continental Congress, — a step which Massachusetts found great difficulty in taking, owing to the close watch kept upon her by the royal agents. She was the natural leader, and without her the Congress would prove a failure; but she was chained and guarded. Her General Court could not meet except as called together by Gage; and if the representatives sought to contravene his will, he by his mere dictum could at any moment dissolve the court. This he had once done, just as Adams was introducing a resolution to appoint delegates. But Gage was not long in learning that he was no match for the man he sought to put down in this cowardly manner. The court is assembled at Salem. Gage has a spy in the room to report any obnoxious doings. The crisis has come. Adams has conversed with the members privately, and is sure of

his majority. By some quiet management, the door of the room is locked and the key in Adams's pocket. The motion to appoint the delegates is now made. There is one wild storm of excitement. A Tory member feigns sickness, and, being let out, runs to tell Gage. But no one is admitted. The governor writes his order, and hurries off his messenger with it, to dissolve the court. - He finds a throng of excited people about the building, but calls in vain for the door to open. Samuel Adams has turned a key upon the whole majesty of England! He is carrying the destinies of a nascent republic in his single pocket. And those destinies were safe, as what interest of human liberty was not always safe in his keeping? Incomparable patriot! Called by thine enemies Sam the Maltster, Samuel the Publican, the Chief Incendiary, the Psalm-singer, verily thou wast in that exigency, as wise men are glad to own, the Father of America, "the first politician in the world," the last of the Puritans' political parent, the Palinurus of the Revolution. The opening of that door was to England as the opening of the Apocalyptic seals. Out of it moved the Continental Congress, the Declaration of Independence, the War of the Revolution, American citizenship, and the humiliation of Great Britain!

The public life of Adams may be said to have now culminated. No other man of that day was an object of such romantic interest, both to his countrymen and the world. Not that he was the idol of the people; that is too tame a word. He was their revered Father, to whom they looked with the trustfulness of dear children, as the conqueror of England and the deliverer of America. Being about to start for Philadelphia with the Massachusetts delegation, he finds at his

front door a large trunk with his name on it, containing a suit of clothes, two pairs of shoes, a set of silver shoe-buckles and of gold knee-buckles, sleeve-buttons bearing the device of a liberty-cap, an elegant cocked hat, a gold-headed cane, a red cloak ; in short, a complete outfit of wearing apparel for a gentleman of that time. And this was but one of the almost numberless attentions which, with equal delicacy, were showered upon the great man who had made himself poor that he might enrich his country and his race. That was a memorable day when Adams with his three associates set out from Watertown in the special coach provided for them. Strange hopes and fears were in all hearts, and manly tears stood in many an eye, as they grasped the hands of Warren, Hancock, the two Coopers, Paul Revere, and Josiah Quincy, — the last an especial favorite of Adams, so young, so frail, the hectic flush already burning on his cheek. Ovations await them all along the road. They are welcomed into cities and towns, and feasted, and escorted on their way. Samuel Adams is the especial hero, — he of the midnight lamp and the waking wife, who had never been fifty miles from Boston before, — and when the coach rolls into Philadelphia, the desire to see him is intense. But he has no vanity, no vulgar ambition, to be inflamed by the plaudits of the throng. He takes his seat among the delegates, — the same quiet, patient, far-sighted, toilful man as when he sat in the little library at home. The precedence naturally due to him, he yields to others. If the more southern colonies will come into the plan for independence, they may have the honors ; all he asks, for himself and Massachusetts, is that they be allowed a full share of the work and sacrifice. The session is

to be opened with prayer. Who shall officiate? Adams persuades his friends to yield their scruples, smothers his own hereditary dislike of the English Church, and pleases Virginia and South Carolina by getting the service assigned to a friend of theirs, Mr. Duché. As the Revolution goes forward, it becomes necessary to choose a commander-in-chief of the Continental armies. Again the unselfish wisdom of Adams comes out. He sets aside his friend and protégé Hancock, who is eager for the office, and secures the election of Washington. Few persons have understood, however, what the old patriot lost by this step. It cost him the friendship of John Hancock and the favor of Massachusetts, where Hancock, owing to his vast wealth, had great influence. The noble old man found that even Boston could not follow him in his career of unselfishness. She valued her claims to distinction; could not imitate him by giving the precedence to other colonies; felt that he was false to her by keeping her in the background. Hancock never forgave him. He ceased to be the popular favorite in his own colony. Is there anything in personal biography more sublime? Behold him, — turning life-long friends into enemies, blasting all his political prospects, going under a cloud from which he was never to emerge in his lifetime; and all that he might make the union of the colonies a certainty, that their armies might be under a wise and safe leader, that they might be sure of independence and nationality, and that the country might forever rejoice in the illustrious name of Washington! It was a beautiful coincidence in after-years, while Washington was visiting at Cambridge, and Hancock (then governor) refused to wait on him, that Adams was sent to welcome to

the hospitalities of the commonwealth the man for whom he had, literally almost, "suffered the loss of all things." Whether "the Father of his Country" ever fitly recognized his indebtedness to Adams or not, is uncertain. But no envious word, no murmur, no sigh as of a wounded spirit, was ever heard from the lips of the devoted patriot. His face wore its wonted look of patient cheerfulness. Where was the smallest pay and the greatest toil in the public service, there he was willing to be; nor did he seem to have any wish for himself but to be worn out and offered up in the sacred cause of liberty. I ought to add here, in justice to the greatest name, perhaps, in the annals of the church to which I minister, that Samuel Adams was an earnest and consistent Christian, an old-fashioned, orthodox Puritan Christian, all his life. One of the last letters he ever wrote was addressed to Thomas Paine, and remonstrated with that scoffer against the publishing of his infidel books. Adams had no faith in a freedom which is divorced from Christianity. On the contrary, he felt that freedom without religion is but a mockery. His home was a Bethel. In it there was family worship — no matter who might be present, or how great the stress of business — as often as the morning and evening came. And no meal was ever eaten without the reverent blessing before it. The Sabbath found him in his place at church with his family, — always, when he could, taking part in the singing, in which exercise he seemed at times to be helped by a special inspiration. The Christian character of such a man reveals the utter puerility of the taunt which we sometimes see cast at pious statesmanship. It reveals the profound source of Adams's patriotism. It teaches the

legislator of to-day, that he never rises to his true dignity, and wields all the influence he is capable of, till he rises into communion with God. Such patriotism could not have its reward amid the strifes of mortal men. Only in the serene and immortal life, which begins when the blessed wave of death has closed over all, could the transcendent virtues of Adams put forth their bloom. He is no exception to the everlasting truth of the great words, "He that humbleth himself shall be exalted, and whoso loseth his life shall find it." It was sown in weakness; it is rising in power. It was sown without honor from men; it is rising to eternal and universal renown. There was beseeeming beauty in the lines applied to him at his death:—

"Ne'er to those chambers where the mighty rest,
Since their foundation, came a nobler guest;
Nor e'er was to the bowers of bliss conveyed
A fairer spirit, or more welcome shade."

And future generations will see more and more of the depths of simple truth in the lines beneath a picture of him made while he was in the zenith of his career:—

"When haughty lords, impressed with proud disdain,
Spurned at the virtue which rejects their chain;
Heard with a tyrant scorn our rights implored;
And when we sued for justice sent the sword,—
Lo! Adams rose, in warfare nobly tried;
His country's saviour, father, shield, and guide:
Urged by her wrongs, he waged the glorious strife,
Nor paused to waste a coward thought on life."

There are lessons in the career of Samuel Adams which ought not to be lost on our public men of this generation:—

1. They should learn from him that the adequate policy is the only one to succeed. There were, in his day, men who believed in half-way measures as a

remedy for colonial wrongs, and who advocated such measures till the march of events left them among the enemies of their country. But Adams, foreseeing independence to be the only basis of a lasting settlement, dared, against the remonstrances of timid friends, to toil for it till the result proved his far-seeing wisdom. So, in our day, there are men who plead for temporary expedients, hoping thereby to pacify a distracted Union. It is strange that they should so fail in their diagnosis, or that they should expect superficial remedies to cure so inveterate a disease. As history has proved Adams's treatment to have been wisest for what was then suffered, so it will yet be proved that the men laboring for equality of rights throughout this Union, and insisting on them as preliminary to a final settlement of our troubles, are our wisest and safest leaders. The through policy is best. We shall learn, as one compromise after another fails, that no other policy is adequate. Let us hope that the patient has vitality enough to hold out, through all the foolish experimenting now going on, till that sovereign remedy is applied.

2. The career of Adams should teach our public men to heed carefully the signs of the times. Those signs are the striking events, occurring in a nation's onward march, indicating the state of public sentiment, — the pulse-beats of the popular heart. Adams never blundered here. He rode on the crest of the wave, and never sought with yesterday's policy to control the spirit of to-day. When he saw the applause which everywhere greeted Otis's speech against Writs of Assistance, he knew it was idle any longer to expect reconciliation with England. When the Stamp Act was repealed at the demand of the colo-

nists, he saw that it had become safe to resist the British ministry. After the massacre in King Street, he dared to rely on the courage of his countrymen. And when Captain Parker's men were shot down at Lexington, understanding that it meant independence and union, he exclaimed, "What a glorious morning is this!" He so valued events of this kind, that he urged the keeping of their anniversaries, thereby lifting the free sentiment of the country constantly to a higher level. Now, had he pursued his object still as though nothing had happened, after these mighty changes of public sentiment, he would have fallen under foot and been trampled down by an advancing people. This nation has a new heart to-day, throbbing with the spirit of impartial liberty; and only those who, like "the first politician in the world," discern the popular pulse, and govern themselves accordingly, may hope to escape our scorn, and to share in the victory which awaits us.

3. The story of Adams should teach the young men of America that there is a patriotism more to be desired than all preferments or honors of office. Adams could have lived in affluence, and amid the splendors of the English court, had he chosen to go over to the side of royalty. But if he had ambition, it was crucified. Love of country overcame the temptation of riches, and made poverty welcome. What ignominy would have settled on his name had he been more ambitious and less patriotic! His reward, though late in coming, is vast and glorious. He has robbed the grave of its oblivion, and lives on, — an example and inspiration to the American patriot. How short-lived the memory of those who are devoted to the fruits of party success! Such ambition, if it deserves so gentle

a name, is the loathsome ulcer of politics. Would you escape this corruption, and be had in honorable remembrance? then ask simply that you may serve, and not that you may be rewarded. Remember him whose whole life was given to his country; who stood fast in the place which demanded most and paid least; who, without a murmur, saw leader after leader chosen over his own head — men whom he had trained and introduced to the public. Something better was in store for him. His grand life, unstained by corruption, unclouded by the insignia of office, was to shine as a star in the high firmament of patriotism. We know men whom political office has but gibbeted in everlasting infamy; and we know other men who, without aspiring to political eminence, and spurning the base rewards of party, are laying up for themselves a name which shall yet draw to it the reverent gaze of their country and the world. You must expect in politics that, like “the Father of America,” you will see new converts riding over tried men in political conventions. It has always been so, nor is there yet much sign of change. Therefore let patriotism, and devotion to the right, be your inspiration. How much safer, and how vastly more glorious, to tread in the footsteps of Adams — devoted to principle for the sake of principle — than to venture among the bogs and pitfalls of a vulgar ambition! The prize of victory in the arena of politics is the same as everywhere else. If you would win the greater prize, you must not be ambitious of the less. If you would go in for immortality, you must not go in for spoils.

¹ Words of surprise, and strong words of reproach,

¹ Written in 1866, before any statue was erected to Adams in the country.

are uttered from time to time, because the country as yet contains no monument to Samuel Adams. Not many persons — a few reverent pilgrims — know where his ashes repose. In this respect he recalls the mighty Hebrew lawgiver, of whom Bryant so grandly sings : —

“When he, who from the scourge of wrong
Aroused the chosen tribes to fly,
Saw the fair region promised long,
And bowed him on the hills to die,
God made his grave to men unknown,
Where Moab’s rocks a vale infold,
And laid the aged seer alone
To slumber while the world grows old.”

It is doubtful if any memorial, such as might destroy this resemblance to the ancient prophet, could add to the renown of our “political parent.” It would be impossible to present a symbol of his consummate virtues under any artistic form. Equestrian statues, memorial halls, and figures grouped in marble and bronze, may image to us a heroism less fundamental and more confined than his ; but what lines of beauty or of majesty shall enclose a life which made itself the principle and the animating soul of a great nation ? The only fit monument to such a life is that which the friends of freedom are unconsciously building, — a vast temple of republicanism, its base the broad continent, and its dome the bending heavens ; equal laws inscribed all over its living walls, and its worship the multitudinous activities of a just and brave and Christian people.

JOHN BROWN.¹

A FEW years ago, I came before you to speak for John Brown in the name of charity ; to-night I am here at your call to speak his triumph. Then it was not thought prudent to stand forth in his defense ; now no wise man wishes to be known as his enemy : for what he then sowed in weakness has been raised in power, and his mortal has put on immortality.

I can bring no fact concerning John Brown with which you are not already familiar ; I can utter no eulogy upon him which shall do justice to your present impressions.

Our theme opens naturally in the following order : first, the work which he did ; secondly, how he was made ready for it ; and thirdly, the manner of his doing it.

I. The providential work of John Brown — that which makes his name historic and immortal — consisted in rallying the friends of liberty to open and immediate encounter with Slavery. He sounded the charge to final and victorious battle. It was his hand that took the free sentiment of the country as a thunderbolt and hurled it with crushing effect on the head of the Southern idol. To show you that I do not take this point without due cause, let us go back a little.

On the one hand was Slavery, — from the very necessity of its nature a mortal foe to the republic.

¹ Lecture delivered in Music Hall, Boston, December 3, 1867.

For three generations that enemy had been growing strong and with consummate art intrenching its position. Weak at first, and admitted to be an evil, it was abhorred of all, — even those most nearly related to it. What first blunted this keen Southern conscience, and started a spirit of dalliance elsewhere, was the sudden importance of the cotton culture. The manufacturer was growing rich on this product, and was enriching the planter who furnished it. This mutual interest displaced conscience, and gave us on the one side compromise, on the other side the slave-power. It became the height of Southern ambition to own more negroes to raise more cotton to get more money to buy more negroes. Under the specious plea of State Rights, Slavery was declared unassailable by the general government, even while stealthily plotting to bring that government under its control. The more it was let alone, the bolder it became. Finding its smaller demands met, it dared to bring greater, until at last it was installed in the highest seats of authority. The sanctions of law, the blandishments of wealth, and the charms of polite culture girded it about. We came to present the monstrous spectacle of a free nation ruled by a slave-holding oligarchy. And never was despotism seemingly more thoroughly intrenched. The venomous reptile glared and brandished its forked tongue with perfect impunity. “Touch me not!” was the legend written on its front, and the approach of any disturbing foot started its deadly rattle.

On the other hand, side by side with this gradual ascent of slavery to supreme power, the sentiment of liberty had been rising and intensifying throughout the North. We had but few men who attempted to

justify slavery on moral grounds. More generally, our people looked upon it as a Providential evil and mystery ; or, while condemning it, they refused to interfere with it, on grounds of expediency and constitutional obligation. The feeling of dislike was everywhere, from out-speaking abolitionism down to those who amiably doubted and “waited for God’s time.” And these latter, lifted by the lever of events, were rising steadily, till at last our nation became a house divided against itself. Every success of slavery on the one side intensified the sentiment of freedom on the other. It sowed the wind only to reap the whirlwind, found each new device returning to plague the inventor. The wiping out of the Missouri line made thousands of Abolitionists. Torrey and Lovejoy, a handful of corn in the earth, became as the cedars of Lebanon. There was more love of liberty after the annexation of slaveholding Texas than ever before. The army which marched from the Rio Grande to Mexico, under Taylor and Scott, made anti-slavery men here faster than it slew Mexicans there. The Fugitive Slave Law caused millions to spring to their feet, and swear that Slavery itself should be the fugitive and vagabond. And the Dred Scott decision, which was to give the kingdom to the conspiring oligarchy, made the whole world cry out for vengeance.

Thus stood the two hostile powers, — on that side the South, haughty and aggressive ; on this side the North, indignant but not seeing how to strike. The wolf which secretly preyed on our flocks lay deep in its lair ; and a Putnam was wanted to enter and drag the monster forth. The instincts of a free people had gathered, like heaped-up waters, above the bold iniquity : who would go in and unlock the gates, that

they might rush through and sweep it away? Truth with Ithuriel spear had touched the enemy, and reduced him to his proper ugliness; but men looked in vain for any seed of woman that should bruise his head. A deep gulf lay between the criminal and the avenger, and none of us could tell how we might cross it. What we needed, what Liberty needed, what the world needed, was one who could bridge this chasm; who had power to make his own life a path, over which we might advance till the foe should be in range of our weapons. The exigency called for a man brave enough and devoted enough to rush forward through compromise and legal enactment, gathering the hostile spears into his own bosom, till a path should be cleared for the soldiers of freedom. The disguise of law must be stripped off. The monster must be forced to show his true nature. Life must be nobly sacrificed, or our bolts would never smite down the hideous wickedness.

Here was the work of John Brown. For this he was the Lord's chosen. God is not mocked. His quiver is full of arrows. He foresees His own ends, and makes ready His own instruments. Where is the altar and the wood, there also He provides the lamb for the sacrifice. In the grand crisis that had now come, the man of His right hand is a simple farmer keeping his sheep in the wilderness. He takes this poor man out of the woods, and with him breaks the spell that is on Northern vengeance; counts him worthy to suffer; teaches him, by His own secret inspirations, how to let loose the lightnings of an outraged civilization.

I know you will tell me it was Sumter that fired the Northern heart. But Sumter was the reverbera-

tion of Harper's Ferry. The opening of the war of emancipation, hereafter in history, will date, not from Anderson's defense of a Southern fort, but from John Brown's martyrdom on a Southern scaffold. Do I remember how you sprang to arms when the cannons' boom came rolling northward from Charleston harbor? Oh, yes! who that saw the day can ever forget it? But I remember, too, when you marched forth to overwhelm the uprising treason, it was not the Flag that you sung, nor the Union and Constitution, but the soul of Old John Brown. That was the music to which you kept step all your weary way to the front; which thrilled you in the awful shock of battle; which you poured out plaintively on the night air while the stars looked down on your dying comrades. Argue as we may, and say what we will, the final verdict of history will be, that John Brown on a Virginia gallows was the spark which lit the train, which fired the mine, which blew to atoms the institution of American Slavery!

II. Such was the work — the awful work of self-devotion even unto death — for which humanity waited, while the souls under the altar were crying, "O Lord, how long!" And this work is the standard by which to try the character of John Brown. It is unfair and impertinent to judge him by any other test. The question is not, Was he a gentleman in the conventional sense; was he nicely observant of the rules of polite society; was he graceful and refined after the similitude of a man of the world? but, Was he adapted to his Providential work, — the sublimest work of the century? Tried by this test, he can receive but one verdict: God made him just what he needed to be to fulfill his God-appointed mission.

1. First, the ancestral spirit in him was marvelously suited to his mission. He came of a heroic stock, — a race of willing sufferers for truth, of whom the world was not worthy. He was the sixth in descent from Peter Brown, one of the immortal company of the *Mayflower*. His mother was the child of a Revolutionary officer, and his father's father died struggling for American independence. He was duly proud of this family record, and cherished in himself the spirit of his ancestors. That spirit was not only martial, but religious and conscientious. His fathers had ever stood on the side of truth and right. For this good cause the exile to Plymouth, the unstoried hardships in primeval wilds, the laying down of life in resistance to Britain. Such was the succession into which John Brown came. He felt the glow of this ancestral fire. He was resolved that his name should be worthy to be carved on the gravestone where he had put the names of his fathers. Perhaps he dreamed, perhaps he did not, that he should make that stone monumental in the annals of liberty.

2. John Brown had that peculiar moral organization of which martyrs are made. The marked feature in him was not the sentimental or the intellectual, but the ethical. It did not occur to him ever to ask what is expedient, what is safe, but what is right. The beauty that charmed him was moral beauty, the only greatness he respected moral greatness, the courage he most admired and coveted moral courage. His anger was the wrath of justice; he could love nothing that was not essentially good; he hated everything that failed to stand before conscience. Duty was the angel that went before him. Her approval was his inspiration; to her he would be true, though

false to all other claims; her divine form he would follow, not counting his life dear, and over any law, custom, or amenity which did not pay her supreme homage. He did not speak of men as strong or weak, but as good or bad; did not look at society as refined or rude, but as pure or corrupt; did not say of actions they are splendid or commonplace, but they are right or wrong. The one long yearning of his nature was, not to be amiable and loved, but to be sternly just. The God he served was a consuming fire to the wicked, and to the down-trodden very pitiful and of tender mercy. Such a man could do but one thing in the presence of a mighty wrong. He must smite with all the power God had given, — must smite unto death, if by any means he can; and nothing is dear to him — name, friends, or life — which may nerve his arm for the fated blow.

3. The religious faith of John Brown helped prepare him for his work. It is faith that removes mountains. Unbelief has no “book of martyrs,” no “lives of the saints.” To doubt is to be weak; only as we believe are we strong. No misgiving as to the truth of his religion ever disturbed the soul of John Brown. He accepted the entire Bible, — Pentateuch, Apocalypse, and all, — and grieved for those who were not upborne by the like precious faith. I shall never forget the wide-open eyes with which a conservative friend gazed on me when I told him that a more devoted Christian than John Brown never lived; and that, too, as judged by the old-fashioned, Puritanic standard. How strange it will sound in future ages, that men claiming to live by the Bible cried, “Away with him, crucify him!” at this aged believer, who knew the Bible almost by heart, whose fervent

prayers went up to God continually, whose Sabbaths were sacredly given to spiritual things, whose children were carefully nurtured in the ancestral faith and piety, whose daily talk was strewn thick with Scripture texts, who promptly rebuked any irreverence or ungodliness that met him, whose letters are models of faithful and tender religious counsel! If ever any life has been hid with Christ in God, it was John Brown's. In that holy retirement, praying and studying for himself, the light dawned upon his mind; and in that divine light he saw the path he ought to tread. There, hardly remembering that there were such things as congresses, and judges, and sheriffs, he learned what he owed to his country, to humanity, and to his God. He knelt at the foot of the divine throne, and human tribunals were to him as though they were not. They might stand in his way, and he be dashed in pieces against them; but the orbit of his will was fixed and changeless. He was a flaming arrow shot from the bow of Justice, — which turned neither this way nor that way, but went right on till it was quenched in the blood of her enemies.

4. John Brown was shaped for his sacrificial work by the simple style of living in which he was bred and which he never forsook. All his ideas as to the family and society were primitive. He was the father of twenty-one children. At home and among friends, he recalled the godly Puritan of Colonial times. His garments had not the perfume of city parlors on them. He knew nothing of the gayeties of life. If he saw a picture or statue, or other costly ornament, in a drawing-room, he would straightway think how many slaves it might buy from bondage. He could not bear to lodge in a great hotel, where the lavish

display pained him, but chose rather to be with farmers and drovers at the plain tavern. God mercifully kept him poor. He knew not the excitement of handling vast sums; to him a fifty-dollar note looked large. He never asked how much comfort, culture, or luxury will this buy, but how much can I make it do for them that are in bonds. The wild-rose of the pastures was not sweeter than his simplicity; the mountain spring under the mossy crag, not purer than his honest thought. What he felt and purposed shone out through his speech as clear as the stars beneath which he watched his flocks. He was so near to Nature as to seem a part of her, — rugged, simple, true and grand; a soul whose fit attendants were the wild-flower, the mountain, the cataract, the fathomless sky, and the pathless woods. To such it is that God speaks, and they dare do anything but disobey His voice. In reply to all cautions coming from any human source, John Brown could only say: —

“ Shall not the Fashioner command His work?
 And who am I, that, if He whisper, ‘ Rise,
 Go forth upon mine errand,’ should reply,
 ‘ Lord God, I love the woman and her sons, —
 I love not scorning: I beseech thee, God,
 Have me excused.’ ”

5. Not yet, however, was the preparation complete. This great soul, smooth as the sea in a calm, must be aroused. The tempest must come down upon it and call forth its hidden wrath, or the pirate ship sailing on in defiance of Heaven will not be swallowed up. Hence the experiences in Kansas, where the slave-power broke through all constitutional restraints and framed iniquity into law. If any respect for lower-law enactments had remained with John Brown thus far, it forsook him now. The lesson which he was

not slow to learn, was set him by the invaders from Missouri. Should they trample down in blood the Free State settlers, and he be held back by the lease of compromise? He would slip that rotten noose. Surely no law could bind him to fight with rose-water those who came against him brandishing clubs and torches. The sacred rights of human nature swept away the cobwebs of legislation. The enemies of man had taken the sword, and they should feel the edge of the sword. The smoke of his burning cabin and the blood of his slaughtered sons told him that the justice which the times needed was not the slow-footed goddess whom the criminal escapes, but that which is swift and smites home. If ever anybody had a right to despise civil law as a means of redress, that man was John Brown. He beheld the bloody riot of oppression, and there was none to deliver the innocent; and therefore he cried out, "Boys, the Lord will aid us!" and he shoved his ramrod down; . . . and far away, where Kansas' grains wave, tinged with their blood, will the column rise! The poet's song and History's page will the deeds prolong of John of Osawatomie, the martyr to Truth and Right. But great as were the deeds there done, a greater was coming. That lawless border war was a part of the needed preparation, — God's mysterious school in which He was training His servant to trust in Himself alone, and strike the blow decreed from eternity at His bidding. Henceforth it was John Brown against Slavery though hell should gape before him; and "the sword of the Lord and of Gideon" was his manifesto. He chose his ground, he took counsel, sought help, prayed, and moved forward. There was a voice behind him which said, "This is the way,"

and he dared not refuse to walk in it. A necessity was laid on him. The hand of destiny had launched him forth. He could no more turn aside from that path than a planet from its orbit. When he stood on the heights overlooking Harper's Ferry, planning the deed for which he had waited twenty years, he might have said, with Luther before the Imperial Diet, "Here I stand; I cannot do otherwise; God help me. Amen."

III. And now let us stand on those same heights while he goes down into the valley of death to finish the work given him to do. Let us see how he led captivity captive; how he laid down his life, that he might give life to a nation and a race of men.

Perhaps nothing excited more ridicule at the time than John Brown's plan for a provisional government found among his papers. I have read that document with care, and find its essential features marvelously prophetic. It anticipates mainly the reconstruction theory of to-day. His prophetic genius, in which the free spirit of the age was incarnate, stood at the goal toward which our statesmen are plodding on, "with manifold motions making little speed."

We need not attempt to justify his attack at Harper's Ferry, since he himself condemned it. We have already seen that he was in the hand of a Higher Power than his own. The will of God overbore his human will, and hurled him forward as its avenging bolt. St. Paul went up to Jerusalem although he knew what would there befall him, being "bound in the spirit:" it was a similar bondage — the constraint of a divine doom — that bore John Brown down into Harper's Ferry. The wisdom of God was in the human mistake, making the momentary defeat an everlasting

triumph. The blow struck on that gloomy October morning carried consternation to the heart of the Slave Power. That enthroned wickedness felt the shock, and, sighing throughout all its frame, gave sign that all was lost.

John Brown was anxious for a public trial. Not that he wished to be acquitted, for he distinctly said, "I shall be worth more to be hung than for anything else." He had three reasons for desiring such a trial: First, that the impression of his insanity, which had spread widely, might be disproved; secondly, that his humane and Christian motives, in what he had done, might be shown; and thirdly, that his martyrdom might be so published abroad as to rouse up feelings of indignation against slavery throughout the world. All this he did in his own simple strength, and at desperate odds, so as to go to the scaffold at last in the rejoicing spirit of a conqueror.

1. In case of any attempt of counsel to plead his cause, he strictly ordered that no plea of insanity must be put in. Annoyed by rumors which were going through the country, he said at his trial, "I am perfectly unconscious of insanity, and I reject, so far as I am capable, any attempt to interfere in my behalf on that score." No one can read the report of the inquisition in the guard-house and not admit that he knew himself perfectly. Governor Wise went from that inquisition to Richmond and said: "They are themselves mistaken who take him to be a madman. . . . He is a man of clear head, of courage, fortitude, and simple ingenuousness. He is cool, collected, and indomitable, and it is but just to say that he was humane to his prisoners. . . . He professes to be a Christian, and openly preaches universal emancipa-

tion." Ah, Pilate! you could find no fault in the man! And one who lacked this impulsive nobleness of the Virginian, the prying politician Vallandigham, went home and said: "Capt. John Brown is as brave and resolute a man as ever headed an insurrection. . . . He is the farthest possible remove from the ordinary ruffian, fanatic, or madman. It was one of the best planned and best executed conspiracies that ever failed." Thus were all his adversaries ashamed.

2. The rumor of blood-thirstiness, with that of insanity, fell to the ground. Never but once has man spoken more lovingly than this man to his tormentors. "How do you justify your acts?" asked Senator Mason. "I think, my friend, you are guilty of a great wrong against God and humanity, — I say it without wishing to be offensive, — and it would be perfectly right for any one to interfere with you so far as to free those you willfully and wickedly hold in bondage." Mason replied that "he understood." "I wish to say, furthermore," added the bleeding prisoner, "that you had better — all you people of the South — prepare yourselves for a settlement of this question. It must come up for settlement sooner than you are prepared for it. . . . You may dispose of me very easily, . . . but this question is still to be settled — this negro question, I mean."¹ The sufferer was too faint to say any more. But he had triumphed. No inquisitor could doubt the loftiness or sincerity of his Christian spirit. He even concerned himself for the spiritual welfare of his enemies. When Governor Wise told him to prepare for eternity, he replied, in moving tones: "Governor, I have, from all appearances, not

¹ Prophetic words, and the prophecy so speedily and how awfully fulfilled!

more than fifteen or twenty years the start of you in the journey to that eternity of which you kindly warn me. And whether my tenure here shall be fifteen years, or fifteen days, or fifteen hours, I am equally prepared to go. There is an eternity behind and an eternity before, and the little speck in the centre, however long, is but comparatively a minute. I therefore want to tell you to be prepared." Brave words these, and as loving as bold; nor did they fail to take captive the susceptible governor. He knew, and warmly asserted ever after, that a tender Christian spirit reigned in old John Brown.

And now his soul is at rest. His captors, too much in fear to spare his life, have yet been forced to own the transcendent quality of his manhood. Words of cheer and offers of ministry, from noble men and women, come pouring in. Europe lifts up her voice in chorus of praise, assuring him that his sacrifice will indeed thrill the heart of the world.

"The outer John Brown they will torture and kill,
And tumble it into the grave;
But the inner John Brown may trouble them still
By its whisperings round with the slave.

"Death nears you, John Brown, old outer John Brown,
And marks you as food for the worm:
Nor death nor the worm can harm inner John Brown;
So, inner John Brown, stand firm."

And he did stand firm, — the one serene spirit in that crowded court-room, watching the course of his trial with a masterly skill, yet lifting not a finger to turn it aside from the fatal issue. He was borne back to his cell after the verdict, where he passed the time writing words of Christian comfort, as strength permitted, to his family. Added to the letter thus penned is a brief

postscript — sublime in its brevity — which simply says : “ Yesterday, November 2, I was sentenced to be hanged on December 2d next. Do not grieve on my account. I am still quite cheerful. God bless you ! Yours ever, John Brown.” Having been carried into court to receive this sentence, he was asked what he had to say, when he rose with much difficulty and said : “ Had I interfered in the manner which I admit, and which I admit has been fairly proved, — had I so interfered in behalf of the rich, the powerful, the intelligent, the so-called great, or in behalf of any of their friends, either father, mother, brother, sister, wife, or children, or any of that class, and suffered and sacrificed what I have in this interference, — it would have been all right, and every man in this court would have deemed it an act worthy of reward rather than punishment. This court acknowledges, as I suppose, the validity of the law of God. I see a book kissed here which I suppose to be the Bible, or at least the New Testament. That teaches me that all things ‘ whatsoever I would that men should do unto me I should do even so to them.’ It teaches me, further, ‘ to remember them that are in bonds as bound with them.’ I endeavored to act up to that instruction. I say, I am yet too young to understand that God is any respecter of persons. I believe that to have interfered as I have done, as I have always freely admitted I have done, in behalf of His despised poor, was not wrong, but right. Now, if it is deemed necessary that I should forfeit my life for the furtherance of the ends of justice, and mingle my blood further with the blood of my children, and with the blood of millions in this slave country whose rights are disregarded by wicked, cruel, and unjust enactments, I submit : so let it be

done." These great words, spoken in calm and tender accents, bowed the angry mob as the wind bows the trees of the wood. They stood awed, and gazing in mute wonder; and in that deep silence, we fancy the old man heard the listening angels clap their hands. Mr. Emerson is not alone in pronouncing this "the most eloquent speech of the century." There is but one that will bear comparison with it — the speech of the Martyr President at Gettysburg. But the speech of Abraham Lincoln was carefully written out in his study; this of John Brown was spoken under the shock of a sudden surprise, and without a moment's preparation. That fell from a strong and well man on the eager ears of listening thousands; this from a man too feeble to stand upright, after the exhausting worry of a fortnight's trial, in the midst of countenances that glared on him with savage wrath. Abraham Lincoln came forth from the executive mansion, and stood on a great battlefield of the war, inspired with memories of a world-renowned victory; John Brown was brought in irons from a felon's cell, and beheld, in vision, only the forms of his slain friends and the shameful gallows. How singular that these two speeches, at which the world will never cease to wonder, were spoken by our country's two greatest martyrs, — one by John Brown, whose martyrdom stands at the opening, the other by Abraham Lincoln, whose martyrdom stands at the close, of the monstrous pro-slavery rebellion! The chord of sympathy which joins North Elba to Springfield is perfect, nor can its vibrations cease to thrill mankind till the love of liberty in their hearts expires. Those two graves have one voice, and teach one lesson: —

“ Right forever of the scaffold, wrong forever of the throne ;
But that scaffold sways the future, and, behind the dim unknown,
Standeth God within the shadow, keeping watch above His own.”

The interval of thirty days between the sentence and its execution is one unbroken triumph. The right man, so often placed at disadvantage, is in the right place at last. The hour had come for John Brown to show what he was. Transfigured on the mount of suffering, his sacrificial spirit shone out with a surpassing lustre. The gold shut within the rocky matrix flowed forth in peerless brightness, now that he was bruised and in the furnace. Few things are beautiful out of season, but everything in its season, and John Brown's season had come. You have read the legend of the enchanted harp. For ages it stood silent on the mountain top, its strings black with the eating rust, while tree and leaf and blossom flourished around. But at length the hurricane was let loose. And while the great oaks lay prostrate, and flowers and leaves were smitten into the ground, that harp stood unscathed above the ruin, and gave forth strains of music that charmed and stilled the warring elements. Thus it was with the soul of old John Brown. No one in whom the instincts of humanity yet lived could look on him during that month of waiting and not say, with Governor Wise, “ He is the best specimen of a man I ever met.” If there had been anything rustic or overbearing in him before, it all now disappeared. The tempest howling in wrath about him put his great nature in tune. His manners grew gentler than any knight's, his accents tender as a mother's by her sleeping infant, his eye calm with the light of suffering love. I ought not to mar his letters by quoting from them. Get them, and read them for

yourself. You will find them full of such passages as this: "I have enjoyed remarkable cheerfulness and composure of mind ever since my confinement; and it is a great comfort to feel assured that I am permitted to die for a cause, not merely to pay the debt of nature, as all must. . . . I am entirely composed, and my sleep in particular is as sweet as that of a healthy, joyous, little infant. I pray God that He will grant me a continuance of the same calm, delightful dream — if it be a dream — until I come to know of those realities 'which eyes have not seen, and which ears have not heard.' I have scarce realized that I am in prison, or in irons at all." And what could be nobler than this, in his last letter to his family? — "I am waiting the hour of my public murder with great composure of mind and cheerfulness, feeling the strong assurance that in no other possible way could I be used to so much advantage for God and humanity, and that nothing that either I or all my family have sacrificed or suffered will be lost." But once more, ye who have an ear for the gems of composition, listen to this: "I cannot remember a night so dark as to have hindered the coming day, nor a storm so furious or dreadful as to prevent the return of warm sunshine and a cloudless sky." Did that sentence flow from the pen of Jeremy Taylor or Laurence Sterne? Oh, no! it is simply the postscript to a familiar letter, written in a Virginia prison by a doomed man "who knew not letters, having never learned." The assurance that God had counted him worthy to suffer was his liberal education. This consciousness gave all his spiritual powers an instantaneous maturity, such as universities and long years of patient study cannot afford.

And this is the man whom they led forth to death

on that clear December day. The heavens greeted him with unwonted splendor. And his keepers trembled, and their joints were loosed through fear, as they saw him give the kiss to the poor slave-mother's child. And so he led the way, going before them up to the place of sacrifice. But hold! what is that? See him raise his pinioned arm, and reverently lift the covering from his head! Ah, it is a vision! He beholds the long procession of martyrs of all ages filing past; and he salutes them, and wishes not to be "kept waiting," as he sees them halt and open their glittering column to receive him in! And so he bows his head, and the wave of death — wave of life immortal — rolls over him. And they that had stood afar off weeping, came and took up his body, and bore it away secretly by night, for fear of the scorers; and they laid it tenderly to rest beside the ancestral gravestone, and carved his name on the everlasting granite, and departed.

"And the stars of heaven were looking kindly down,
And John Brown's soul was marching on."

I had thought, before finishing these remarks, to make some reply to those who condemned the act of John Brown. But after all that has happened, I do not like even to seem to look at him from that point of view. To do so is to confront the judgment of mankind. A voice as the voice of many waters replies to the charge that he was wrong. We have wiped from our statute-books, amid the acclamations of our people, the enactments which made him a martyr. What further need has he of vindication? The pirate craft which sunk his little bark has itself been blown to the winds by our good ship of state, which now walks the sea in triumph with his flag at mast-

head. John Brown needs not our defense to-day, but we cannot stand without his. If any attempt to speak against him, the universal conscience bids them be silent; the very ground on which they think to stand has been swept away. Who am I, that I should take up weapons in his defense whose only foes are the enemies of man? The most that can be said to-day is what Owen Lovejoy said on the floor of Congress while revolvers were pointed at his head: "In regard to John Brown, you want me to curse him. I will not curse John Brown. You want me to pour out execrations on the head of old Osawatomie. Though all the slaveholding Balaks in the country fill their houses with silver and gold and proffer it, I will not curse him. I honestly condemn what he did, from the standpoint of human law: but I believe that his purpose was a good one; that, so far as his own motives before God were concerned, they were honest and truthful; and no one can deny that he stands head and shoulders above any other character that appeared on the stage of that tragedy from beginning to end."

But let us take the ground of human law a moment, and see what follows. The statutes which moved John Brown to go down to Harper's Ferry have been expunged, while those which judge traitors to death yet remain. Where were Jefferson Davis to-day, and all the officers and men who fought under him, if the chalice commended to John Brown's lips should return to theirs? Though I think it was a lighter punishment to be hanged by Governor Wise than to be pardoned by Andrew Johnson. Say that John Brown was "justly hung," and the South should have been a desert before now. I go as far as any in the spirit of forgiveness; as far as it is safe to go in the policy of

amnesty. But let us not strain at a gnat while swallowing a camel. Let us not hurl a dead law at one who intended no wrong, but only right, while holding back the sword from those whom sheer justice, whether human or divine, forbids to live.

There is no name, however bright, connected with John Brown's by a friendly link, but is the brighter for that connection. John A. Andrew of Massachusetts dared to say that "John Brown was right;" and that one brave step was what made him our peerless governor throughout the war. The lips which once cursed Governor Andrew for that word are blessing him to-day. Then they went into a public hall in Boston, and broke up a public meeting, shouting, "Tell John Andrew John Brown's dead;" now they are asking how they can honor a governor whose official career so honors not only his own State, but the nation and the age. That which bound our hearts to Andrew as with hooks of steel was his sympathy with everything which smote the monster of oppression. And this is the charmed flower in his memorial garland which can never fade though every other should perish and fall away. As of him, so of others, — the dead and the living, the lofty and the lowly, the conspicuous and the obscure. They dared to honor at least the motives, if not the act, of John Brown. And now his world-wide renown is in turn an ornament and glory to them.

But if John Brown sheds such lustre on those who stood forth for him, what of those who insisted that he should be slain? We shall see. I have seen a letter from the wife of the general who commanded the Virginia troops at John Brown's execution. It is a letter written since the war, and begging a little

charity for herself and her half-starved children. She paints in vivid colors the contrast between former grandeur and her present want. It was her husband, General Taliaferro, that kept the martyr waiting with the rope about his neck while his regiments performed the dumb show of a battle. The officer whom Mr. Buchanan sent to represent the United States at Harper's Ferry was Colonel Robert E. Lee. I but speak his name; you know the rest. It is a scroll we do not care to examine, flying in the midst of heaven, and written all over with mourning, lamentation, and woe. The lieutenant who led the marines against the engine house was J. E. B. Stuart, afterwards Lee's favorite cavalry officer, and slain in one of the battles near Richmond. The two politicians who worried the old man with their cross-questioning while his every breath was a low groan, were Clement L. Vallandigham, whom North and South alike spewed out of their mouth in war-time; and Senator Mason, the accomplice of Slidell, whose name now flits about the earth spurned by every manly foot.

As of men, so of places. There is no spot of ground closely related to the great deed of John Brown but owes its fame to him. For his sake, history will celebrate Harper's Ferry, the battlefields in Kansas, and the remote farm at North Elba. He rescues those places from obscurity, and makes them memorable for all coming time. He does for them what Shakspeare does for Stratford-upon-Avon, what Washington does for Mt. Vernon. Not for their own sake will future generations come thronging to those localities, but that they may pay homage to his spirit, and "take from him increase of devotion to that cause for which he paid the last full measure of devotion."

7

There are to-day millions of people all over the world who know nothing of important battles fought near Harper's Ferry; but they know, and can never forget, that John Brown there struck for humanity and God. Those everlasting hills are his monument, and will be more and more cherished as that, and nothing more, till heavens and earth pass away. As long as those mountains stand, it shall be their proud office to speak of him. And the far-off plains of Kansas, joining with the lofty Adirondack peaks, shall take up the voice. And so all together, in eternal chorus, shall proclaim: —

“They never fail who die
 In a great cause. The block may soak their gore;
 Their heads may sodden in the sun; their limbs
 Be strung to city gates and castle walls,
 But still their spirit walks abroad. Though years
 Elapse, and others share as dark a doom,
 They but augment the deep and sweeping thoughts
 Which overpower all others, and conduct
 The world at last to freedom.”

Soldiers in this sacrificial army, men and women toiling for the rights of human nature, bethink you to-day into whose labors you have entered. Sit not idly down to exult over the victories of the past. Other battles are to be fought, and other victims must bleed, before the full triumph can come. In that vision of the risen martyrs, who halted near John Brown while he stood ready to be offered, the past and future were one. He saw but a single host; God's whole sacramental army — stretching away to the first and on to the last — of them that are slain for Him and His word. Who are they — the anointed ones in coming ages — on whom the dying martyr saw his mantle fall? The Lord knoweth them, and will bring them forth in their season, as one great crisis

after another calls for the sacrifice. They are the best beloved among His children, dearer to Him than the apple of His eye ; and therefore are they chosen out, that He may put this special honor on their names. All that is good in the world is safe. Love, justice, and truth shall still prevail. For these chosen ones shall come forth as they are needed, and shall fill up what is behind of holy suffering. Though weak in themselves, and shrinking with an awful dread from such testimony as John Brown gave, their heavenly Father shall make them able to drink the cup which He drank, and to be baptized with His baptism.

EULOGY UPON HENRY WILSON.¹

“**THY** gentleness hath made me great!” are the words which David spoke to God, in the day which saw him victorious over his foes, and sitting crowned as the king of Israel. “Thy gentleness hath made me great!” are the words which Henry Wilson may reverently and thankfully utter, as he bows before the white throne of heaven, and yields up the record of his remarkable life. Whatever he was in his character and achievements, he was in a singular manner the workmanship of God. Name and lineage did nothing for him but to drag him down; nor could he begin to rise till he had cast them off. Wealth did not help him, nor social standing, nor the university, nor polite culture, nor the gifts of genius, — if we except his gift for eager and unremitting toil. God said, “I will take this child of obscurity and want, and will show the world how I make leaders for nations. No flesh shall glory in my presence. Men shall see that I choose the things which are not, to bring to naught things that are. I will teach those who boast that Abraham was their father, that I can of the stones raise up children to Abraham.” How ungentle his birth, his lot in boyhood and youth, and even much in his later manhood! — all unpropitious, save the stooping and uplifting gentleness of God which was with him from first to last. God foresaw what was coming

¹ Delivered in the State House, Boston, Mass., November, 1875.

to a great people ; and in the loneliness and silence of the hill-country of New England He gently began to make ready His man for the exigency. Humbler than the employment of the lad who kept his father's sheep at Bethlehem was that of the future Senator and Vice-President. The lion and the bear which he met and slew, were the temptations of ignorance and pinching poverty. Like the Bethlehemite's son, he was of a ruddy and fair countenance ; nor did the cares of state ever take that bloom from his genial face. His young eyes looked on the hoary grandeur of Mount Washington. He strolled about the shores of the beautiful Winnepesaukee, — " God's smile." He plucked the wild rose of the pastures, and walked beneath the whispering pines. These were the framework of his infancy and boyhood ; these his solemn teachers ; these the influences of nature, through which the still small voice of God spoke to him.

Very likely he did not comprehend the voice, or know who it was that spoke, in those tender years. The divine dream was in his soul, but he waited for the day to declare it. He carried it with him, a fire shut up in his bones, when he went from his comfortless home to be the drudge of a farm. Here he first began to be conscious of the indwelling energy, feeling it in the form of an insatiable thirst for knowledge. He was permitted to attend the district school on days when he could not work out of doors ; and one of his first feats was to say his grammar-book through, from end to end, at a single recitation. He took long walks after nightfall, that he might read a borrowed book or newspaper too precious for him to take home, — reading them eagerly, so as to be back at his work when the morning should dawn. A kind lady, a sister of

the late Levi Woodbury, saw what spirit was moving in him, and gained him access to her husband's ample library. Thus he was enabled to read about a thousand volumes before he was twenty-one years old; reading them, as we shall see by computing the time, at the rate of two a week, — reading by the flickering brands on the hearth, for the most part, while his exacting master slept.

Being now of age, and still obeying the impulse within him, though he knew not that it was from God, he started on foot for a certain town of Natick, where he had heard there was a chance for young men, — having a few dollars in his pocket, and the rest of his worldly goods slung over his shoulder on a straight hickory stick. True emblem of the man was that stick, — honest, self-reliant, tough and strong, as those who leaned upon him always found. He stopped over but one night, on this journey of a hundred miles, and paid for his lodging in advance. Passing through our city on the second day, he was not too weary and footsore to go for a moment to Bunker Hill, whose story he knew by heart; nor to find his way under the dome of our State House, where he stood trembling with enthusiasm. What a contrast between that bashful youth, inquiring his way of gruff attendants, and the scenes of the last few days! — his death a matter of concern in foreign courts; a nation gathering in sorrow around his bier; escorted through Baltimore, ay, through the streets of Baltimore; resting in Independence Hall; Broadway draped, and thronged with civic and military processions; lying in state, where he once was but tolerated, near the sculptured forms of immortal patriots, and amid the battle-frayed standards of the republic and the grand old commonwealth.

That he thirsted for knowledge, and for personal independence, was all he yet knew of the Divine purpose concerning him, as he found his way into the little hamlet near midnight, and asked for work and lodging. A few months of eager reading and toil, during which he seemed hardly to eat or sleep, and he is back among the hills of New Hampshire, teaching in winter, and working and studying all the time, with his face set toward a university course. But suddenly his little earnings are lost through the fault of one whom he had trusted, and he is once more in Natick at his simple craft, the hope of a formal education forever given up. Now he makes the acquaintance of that noble woman, Lydia Maria Child; and thus he is made to breathe the spirit of the Garrison movement, just beginning to stir the strong New England heart. The divine dream in his soul is cleared up a little. He begins to see the path, though as yet he does not recognize the voice. The debates, in the society of young mechanics, turn upon national questions, — finance, manufactures, the rights of the people, the cause of the oppressed. His opponents nickname him the “Natick Cobbler” in an unguarded hour; and his friends, catching up the word as a popular advertisement, send him forth during the Harrison campaign to thrill the souls of the masses, and to win for himself a seat in the General Court. Grave heads shook, and said, “What rustic is this that dares to come pushing and elbowing his way among the polished leaders of the great Whig Party?” He hardly knew himself who he was, any more than they; but God knew, and he yielded to the Divine impulse which was swaying him. He is placed on committees; and he dares to offer minority reports when his conscience

fails to go with the majority. He is returned again and again to his seat by his loving and faithful townsmen. He goes from this hall to the Senate Chamber hard by, where, as presiding officer, he amazes his critics and delights his friends by his felicitous welcomes to President Fillmore, and the famous Hungarian exile, Kossuth. Democrats were dear to him, if their votes might help him place Charles Sumner in the Senate of the United States. His zeal for the American laborer made him a tariff man, — a zeal which logically made him willing that the Free-soil party should join its forces with those of the Native American, so called, though it was his conscience that made him a Free-soiler and Republican. Hence the combined power which, greatly to his surprise, lifted him into a seat on the same floor with Sumner. Never were two men more unlike, in all but the high resolve, which inspired them both, to do what they could for the overthrow of a system which threatened the life of the nation, and offended the conscience of the world.

To the history of the years which followed, almost a score in number, I must barely allude. It is a part of the history of the nation, — the grandest and most dreadful chapter in its annals, in which it was torn by dissensions and baptized with blood. It piqued the culture of our good city that this bluff mechanic should succeed to the place of her Webster, her Everett, her Winthrop, her Choate. But God said even then to the secret heart of some, “Wait a little, and I will show you what I will do with this man for justice, for your country, for your proud commonwealth.” The terrible debate opened from whose seething depths went up the vapors which steadily

gathered into the war-cloud on high. His opponents found, though he was not addicted to either grammar or rhetoric, that his mind was a storehouse of political knowledge, which he could readily marshal against them with crushing effect. While his colleague went into the struggle with a more lordly bearing, and wielded a keener sword, he watched for the key to the position, and so dealt his blows as to cause less danger of recoil. His simple good-nature made him well-nigh invulnerable. What was the use in trying to quarrel with such a man? He seemed to be utterly unconscious of insult, while volleys of abuse, and bloody threats, and stinging taunts and sarcasms filled the air. When Mr. Sumner was stricken down, he said the attack was brutal and cowardly; and for these words he was challenged to mortal combat. But he replied that his conscience would not let him fight a duel, though he believed fully in the right of self-defense; and there the matter dropped. His steady nerves, his sinewy frame, his herculean strength, had been observed; and his foes, feeling sure that somebody besides Henry Wilson would be hurt if they provoked him too far, concluded to let him alone.

At length the gathering cloud burst. It could not be averted; the storm must come. God foreknew this, as we did not; and the men whom His gentleness had been lifting up were ready, each for his solemn part. To Henry Wilson fell the chairmanship of military affairs; and the prodigious capacity for work which he showed in that place is known to all who saw him there. What president or cabinet officer, what general in the field, what governor, or regiment, or patient in the hospital, or soldier's widow, ever had occasion to complain of him? The general-in-chief at

the opening of the war said that his daily task was equal to the strength of ten men. Thus he toiled, till the forces of the rebellion were spent. And in the clear dawn of peace, during the weary efforts at reconstruction which were finally successful, the problem of his life was solved. We all saw for what God had made and endowed him in the light of the terrible exigency which had been his grand opportunity.

And yet the Divine apocalypse was still to come to him. That mystery of the energy which had burned and flamed within him, was to be solved in the presence of death. God quenched the light in his simple home, and laid his only hope of posterity in the dust. He bowed his head, and was silent, and listened. And in that silence he heard the voice which had spoken to him only in confused whispers before. He knew whence it came. It was the voice of God. His soul melted before that open vision; and, lifting his dimmed eyes to the tender face, he said, "Abba, Father." Thenceforth he knew who it was that had raised him up, and disciplined him with hardship, and used him for the great objects of patriotism and philanthropy. He went into the house of that God, and there acknowledged Him as his God, and paid his vows in the presence of the people. From that day forward, as was clear to his nearest friends, he was another man. The surges of ambition and of mighty desires grew calm within him. He walked with God. He had found the interpretation of his dream.

Now he would write his book. Now he would renew old friendships. Now he would pour balm into wounds which had been given in the heat of debate. Now he would visit the South, and show her impulsive people that he had borne them no malice, while de-

nouncing their doctrines, and striving to crush their armies. Now he would be the counsellor of his political party, a modest Nestor among our statesmen, an adviser to those just entering public life, a friend of reformers and of all good reforms. But his calm sun hastened to its going down. Hardly had the secret of the life-long guardianship been revealed to him, when God whispered to him another secret; namely, that he had finished his work. "No more, my child; it is time to take rest," said God; and the silver cord was loosed, the golden bowl was broken, the pitcher was broken at the fountain, the wheel was broken at the cistern.

By a providence much regretted among his friends, the circumstances of his death were singularly like those of his birth. God took him out of the hands of his near friends and went almost alone with him into the capitol of the nation, there spreading for him his dying-couch, beneath that lofty dome, on the field where his hardest battles had been fought, where his mightiest triumphs had been won. "Fear not," said the now well-known voice, as he laid him down. "Fear not: my gentleness, which hath made thee great, is still round about thee; my rod and my staff they shall comfort thee." And so they went, both of them together, into the deepening valley. "You will ride out to-day, Mr. Vice-President," said his attendant, just as his last earthly dawn was fading into the everlasting morning. He did ride out, but not in any material vehicle. The chariot of God was in waiting for him. He rode out of death into life, out of shadows into eternal sunlight, out of corruption into incorruption.

Rulers and public servants, sitting as you now do in the presence of these honored remains, put far

from you the thought that republics are ungrateful. The thanks may be late in coming, but they are sure to him who deserves them. We cannot always see that you are doing right, though such be the fact; for your action may come to us distorted and colored by an unfriendly medium. Some of you, and many others not here, owe much to the noble candor of Henry Wilson in this respect. We always thought better of Congress after listening a quiet hour to him. He was indignant at the charge of wholesale corruption in that body. He insisted that the honesty of no class of men in the country could bear so searching a scrutiny as theirs. His own good name suffered somewhat at times; for he was a practical statesman, and therefore could not always bring his measures up to the level of our ideas. But now we see that he was right; that he sought to do his best; that he did all which the conditions under which he was forced to act would permit him to do. And hence we are content. Nay, we are more than content. We come out to greet him with our welcomes, and to embalm his memory in the nation's heart. The republic mourns him, Massachusetts sorrows over him; but our grief is mild, compared with that of his own townsmen. This great honor is his, that the atmosphere of love grows more dense about him the nearer he gets to his home. In Natick there will be but few dry eyes or open shops on the morrow. The villagers will throng to his modest burial-place, the strong and the feeble, old men and maidens, and matrons and youths; and there they will weep for him, a tomb more precious than marble or bronze. He was their brother, their father, their familiar neighbor, their equal and constant friend.

Ye sons of toil, who have followed me along the pathway of this wondrous life, let not its lesson be lost on you. Let it cheer you in your despondency, and admonish you in your wayward moods. That lesson is, that character is success; that persevering toil is victory; that fidelity to the highest convictions of the soul is honor and renown. This man's story is our argument for patience, for self-denial, for temperance, for simple truth, for love to God and love to man. God has many spheres or planes of duty for His children; but, all alike, those that honor Him He will honor. Despise not the opportunity which He puts into your hand to-day; for small though it be, seeming no more than a thread of gossamer perhaps, it shall grow to a cable in your grasp, and shall draw untold advantages to you. The serious question in our modern life, with its luxury and temptations to ease, is how to train our boys up to that sturdy manhood which shall make them the pillars of the nation. Necessity is the mother of a great many things besides invention. She is the mother of presidents, of statesmen, of profound thinkers, of scholars and poets; and if we cannot make duty a substitute for necessity, where that has been taken away by an easy lot in life, the future of our country is indeed dark.

Thoughtful patriots, looking with concern on the unlifted veil of the future, let your remembrance of what God did through Henry Wilson quiet your forebodings. The same gentleness which raised him up, and made him great for the exigencies of the nation in his day, can raise up others also. Did he seem to you to stand, like a mighty shield, between the highest office in the land and a certain fear which had begun to oppress the air? The same God who

has removed him can put something stronger in his place ; or else, possibly, God means to show us that the fear is groundless. Yes, we will trust our God, who has done marvelous things for us, never yet failing to give us the man for whom the crisis called. Lincoln, and Seward, and Stanton, and Chase, and Andrew, and Sumner, and Wilson, — these, and a great multitude of others, both the lofty and the lowly, in council-chamber and on the field of blood, He has given. What an august company it is ! I see their transfigured forms. Their presence makes this air vital. They fill the room. Their benign faces bend over us. We feel their breath on our hot cheeks ; and their calm words are almost audible to us in the solemn hush of our grief, while they point us upward and say, “ The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms.”

“ O sentinels ! whose tread we heard
Through long hours when we could not see,
Pause now ; exchange with cheer the word,
The unchanging watchword — Liberty !

“ Look backward, how much has been won !
Look round, how much is yet to win !
The watches of the night are done ;
The watches of the day begin.

“ O God, whose mighty patience holds
The day and night alike in view,
Thy will our dearest hopes enfolds ;
Lord, keep us steadfast, patient, true ! ”

Deacidified using the Bookkeeper process
Neutralizing agent: Magnesium Oxide
Treatment Date: April 2006

Preservation Technology

A WORLD LEADER IN PAPER PRESERVATION

111 Thomson Park Drive
Cranberry Township, PA 16066
(724) 779-2111

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 017 458 423 0

